MAY

Adventure

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MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

Who got it—and how

By George Graham Rice

who gives you a smashing picture of money madness and tells how the public fell for the mining stock game and paid him a quarter of a million for three weeks' work at

GOLDFIELD

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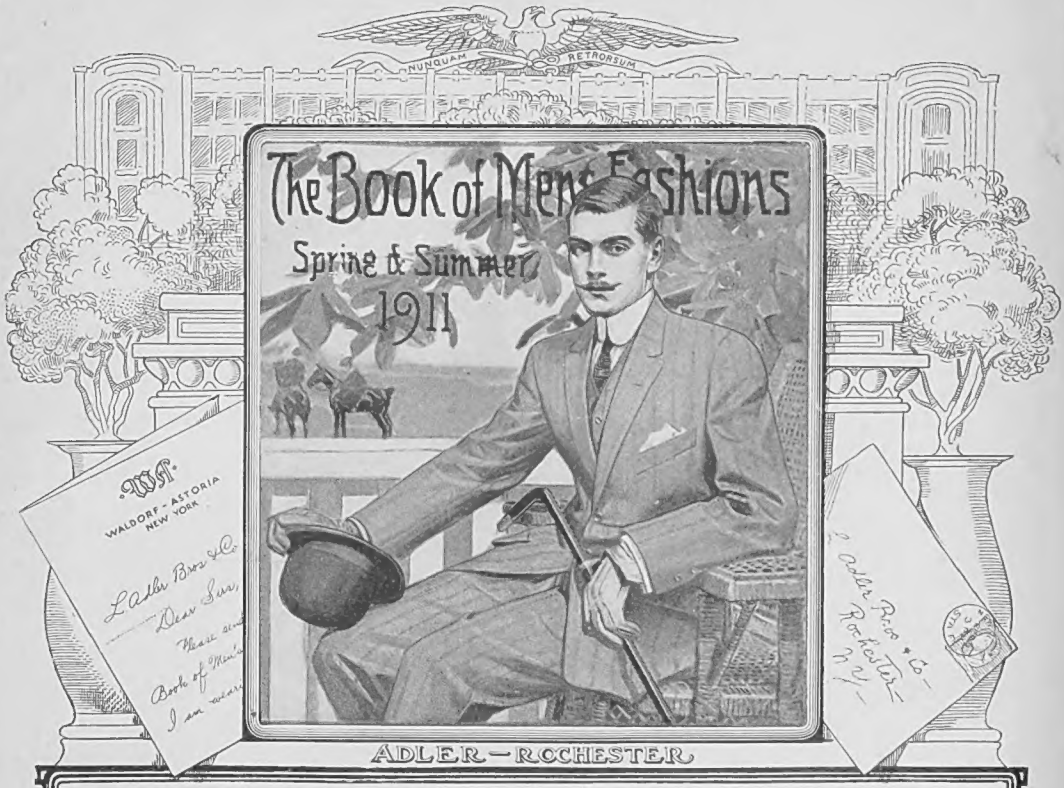
THE RIDGWAY COMPANY PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE



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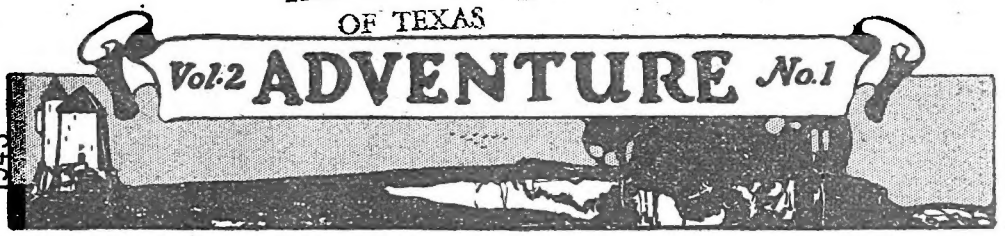

BOUND MAY

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ADVENTURE for JUNE

Fact and Fiction —All Good

In the June number of ***ADVENTURE,*** George Graham Rice, in his ***"My Adventures with Your Money,"*** reaches a climax in Goldfield's great mining-share boom of 1906-1907. The spirit of adventure stalks through the narrative, and yet the story is half tragical, half farcical.

As Vice-President and General Manager of the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company of Goldfield, which earned $3,000,000 in nine months from sales of mining-shares and lost the entire sum in six weeks in supporting the market for its own stocks, and as head of the Goldfield Publicity Bureau, which helped along the gigantic boom, Mr. Rice was in the thick of the Nevada fray and was enabled to observe the inner workings of the machinery which separated the American public from its money. Mr. Rice's geese are geese, and not swans, and he calls a spade a spade.

On the heels of the Mohawk mine's sensational production of $1,000,000 a month came the merger of six Goldfield mines, which could have been bought in 1903 for less than $250,000, into the $36,000,000 Goldfield Consolidated Mines Company. This, Mr. Rice shows, was followed by a madness of mining-stock speculation which cost the public $300,000,000.

Listed Nevada mining-stocks were ballooned to fully $150,000,000 above their intrinsic value and 2,000 wildcat mining companies foisted upon the public for another like amount.

You will find the story worth reading, whether or not you have ever bought or sold a share of mining-stock.

The complete novelette for June is a top-notch detective-story, ***"The Emerald Buddha,"*** by Frederick Arnold Kummer, a thrilling tale of mystery, crime and love. Twenty strong stories and articles fill the magazine, and each one makes good its right to appear under the name ***"Adventure."***

Our field extends wherever man's blood pulses strongly, wherever there is "action," wherever things happen that make the reader's eye grow bright. The June number scours the earth—Mexico, the North woods, Brazil, the Atlantic, California, Italy, Newfoundland, China, England, Venezuela, Africa, France, New Mexico, Germany, New York City, Central America, etc.

And the people you meet in ***ADVENTURE*** range all the way from kings to criminals, from millionaires to tramps, from fashionable ladies to head-hunting savages. You can get anything you want in ***ADVENTURE,*** except to sleep.

ADVENTURE for JUNE

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MAY
1911
VOL. 2
NO. 1

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

II THE MINING STOCK GAME AT GOLDFIELD

by GEORGE GRAHAM RICE

EDITOR'S NOTE—George Graham Rice, Master Adventurer in Popular Finance, knows the methods in use for separating the public from their money. He is telling what he knows. He directed the famous firm of Maxim & Gay, sellers of racing-tips; he raised, directly and indirectly, $200,000,000 for Goldfield, Tonopah, Rawhide and other Nevada mining stocks, by schemes of publicity and promotion. (Possibly you helped in paying him $250,000 for three weeks' work at Goldfield.) By the adoption of his suggestions, the brokerage house of B. H. Scheftels & Company sold and delivered to the American public 15,000,000 shares of mining stocks in nineteen months. Mr. Rice has played the game from the inside. What are your chances in the other man's game? Mr. Rice tells you. In playing the races you have only one chance—you can lose. In margin-trading you have only one chance—you can lose. In buying and holding stocks continuously you have two chances—*maybe* you can break even, or—you can lose. Do you believe it? Let Mr. Rice take you behind the scenes.

I WAS a "busted" New Yorker sojourning on a ranch near Stockton, California. My age was thirty-four. To this rural community I had traveled across the continent in search of a complete change of environment. I was bent on curing myself of the disease in which the suspension of the whole nervous energy on a risk or a chance is as necessary as the dram to the drunkard. Six weeks of rural subsistence appeared to be a wholesome remedy. I felt like a new man.

I had never visited San Francisco. Being close to the city of the Golden Gate—within fifty miles—I decided to "take a look." So one evening, in the late Fall of 1904, I packed my grip and within two hours was comfortably housed in the old Palace Hotel.

The first man I met on entering the lobby

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was W. J. Arkell, formerly one of the owners of *Frank Leslie's Weekly* and of *Judge*.

"Hello, Bill!" I exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"Same as you," he answered. "I was trimmed in American Ice, and I'm broke. I am in hock to the hotel. They think I am worth $2,000,000. I haven't 20 cents."

During the evening we consoled each other over a series of silver gin fizzes, several of which Arkell paid for with the stub of a pencil. My companion promulgated a scheme for the quick putting on their feet of two Eastern rovers adrift in the big Coast city, and that night there was formed the W. J. Arkell Advertising Agency. Then the horse-tipping firm of "Jack Hornaday" was established. I declared that I preferred to have little to do with it except to show "Willie" how it was done in New York *à la* Maxim & Gay.

"I will do it for you, Bill," I said; "but no more for me—I've had enough."

"Jack Hornaday" advertisements appeared daily in all the San Francisco papers. Capable clockers and handicappers were hired and some excellent information was obtained. Race-goers got a run for their money.

But something happened. The race-track trust, which enjoyed a big pull in the San Francisco *Examiner* office, soon realized that somebody outside of the trust was getting the public's money, and every day that "Jack Hornaday" tipped a loser the *Examiner* carried on its sporting page a notice to the effect that "Jack Hornaday's" tip had resulted very disastrously to his clients.

"Jack Hornaday" discontinued business.

I began to like San Francisco and the Coast. Being thrown among Arkell's associates in the Palace Hotel lobby, from time to time I naturally heard a great deal of talk about the new Nevada mining camp of Tonopah.

"Rice," said Arkell one evening, "come with me up to Tonopah and be my press agent. We will get hold of a mining property up there, promote a company and make a barrel of money."

"What do you know about mines?" I asked.

"Well, I've lost enough in 'em to know a great deal," he answered.

"I don't know a mine from a hole in the ground, and I know nothing about the stock-brokerage business; so I don't see how I can be of any assistance," I said.

"Don't let that bother you," he replied. "I'll show you how. You come with me."

"I will go on one condition," I said. "I am in for half on anything you do."

We shook hands and it was a bargain.

We went to the depot. I had a trifle less than $150 in my jeans. Arkell had $75.

"Suppose we get stranded, what will happen?" I propounded.

"Oh, forget it!" he answered. "How can a couple of Easterners like us, wide awake and with phosphorus brains, get stranded anywhere?"

We journeyed to Tonopah—a thirty-six-hour ride. The altitude is 6,000 feet, and it was cold, nasty, penetrating Winter weather. During the last hundred miles of our journey across the mountainous desert we looked out of the car window and saw trainload after trainload of what was said to be ore coming from the opposite direction, and we decided that Tonopah was a sure-enough mining camp and that some of the sensational stories about bonanza mines that we had heard were really true.

ARRIVING in Tonopah after dusk, we sought hotel accommodations. The best we could get was a bed in a forbidding looking one-story annex, walled with undressed pine and roofed with tarpaulin. It was located in the rear of the hotel, which was already crowded with miners and soldiers of fortune drawn from all quarters of the world by the mining excitement. Its aspect was so inhospitable that Arkell and I decided not to retire for a little while. We gravitated out toward the barroom, where the click of the roulette wheel caught our ears.

We sat down to watch the game. Soon we were buying stacks of checks and ourselves bucking the tiger excitedly. In an hour the remnants of my $150 passed to the ownership of the man behind the game, and Arkell had put his last two-bit piece on the black and lost.

I looked at him. He looked at me.

"Umph!" he grunted. "Better hit the feathers!"

Meekly I followed him to the annex. When we got under the soiled gray woolen blankets, I remarked: "I've got a cane and an umbrella and three suits of clothes. Do

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you think we can sell them in the morning for enough to provide breakfast money?"

"Oh, come off!" exclaimed my partner. "Wait till I present my card around this burg in the morning; then we will get all the breakfast we want."

We awoke hungry, as all men have a habit of doing when they are broke.

"I am going over to the Montana-Tonopah Mining Company's office," said Arkell. "A mining engineer by the name of Malcolm Macdonald makes his headquarters over there and he wants to sell some mining properties at Goldfield and in other parts of the State for about three million dollars."

"Three millions!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Arkell. "I'll get the facts and wire them to my friend Joe Hoadley in New York."

"Say, Bill," I remonstrated, "they have a jerkline telegraph in this town, and if you send any 'phony' telegrams over the wire, they'll be on to you. So don't figure on doing any of that kind of business."

"Nothing of the kind!" replied he promptly. "Any message I send to Hoadley he'll answer."

"I guess you have it fixed on the other end," I remarked. He laughed.

We strolled over to the State Bank and Trust Company building, across the street, and there met Malcolm Macdonald, a mining engineer from Butte, Montana, and his friend, Mr. Dunlap, who was at the time secretary of the Montana-Tonopah Mining Company. The conversation was not more than five minutes old when Arkell suggested that he would like to eat breakfast, but "didn't want any restaurants in his," intimating that he would like to have some good, old-fashioned home cooking. Mr. Dunlap remarked modestly that the camp was too young to boast of much home cooking, but that if we would be his guests he would guarantee to make arrangements for some special cooking at the Palace restaurant.

BIDDING $3,000,000 WHEN BROKE

AFTER breakfast, which consisted of mountain trout, the flavor of which was more delicious than anything I had tasted in many years—probably because of the artificial hunger which an empty purse had created—we returned to the office of the bank. There Arkell explained to Mr. Macdonald that he wanted "a big mining proposition or nothing." He said he represented big Eastern capital and that he was prepared to pay from one to three millions for the right kind of property. Mr. Macdonald named some mines and prospects which he said he was willing to sacrifice for $3,000,000.

One of them was the Simmerone, of Goldfield, which Mr. Macdonald offered for $1,000,000. We afterward learned that he had paid $32,000 for it. At that time there was a six-foot hole in the ground, and the whole property contained less than five acres. A stockade had been built around the workings on account of the extreme richness of the ore that had been opened at grass-roots.

Mr. Macdonald also offered for sale a lead property at Reveille and a lead-silver property at Tybo, both situated from 70 to 100 miles from a railroad. (Later these properties, along with some others, were promoted by Charles Minzesheimer & Company, a New York Stock Exchange house, as the Nevada Smelters & Mines Company and passed on to the public at a valuation of $5,000,000. The market value of the entire capitalization of this company is now less than $150,000.) These "mines" were to be put into the deal at $1,000,000 each.

ARKELL wrote a dispatch to the East in the presence of our newly-made friends, describing the offering. Then he and I held a consultation, and he vouchsafed the information that we would certainly get a free automobile ride to Goldfield and have a chance to see the new boom mining camp.

I got "cold feet." Arkell's talk of visionary millions in that bleak environment of snow-clad desert and wind-swept mountain didn't enthuse me at all. I protested against the proposed trip to Goldfield, and insisted that I should be allowed to telegraph to relatives for money with which to return to the Coast.

But Arkell persisted. He declared that the expense of the trip to Goldfield and back to Tonopah would be borne by the vendors of the mines and that our return trip to San Francisco would be delayed only one day. I left my grip, umbrella and cane in Tonopah, intending to return the same evening, and boarded the automobile for Goldfield.

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Arrived in Goldfield, we were escorted to the Simmerone. Arkell appeared to be very much impressed, although he remarked to me a few minutes later that he would not give $34 for the whole layout. And therein he was wise. The Simmerone was later capitalized for 1,000,000 shares, each share of a par value of $1, boosted on the San Francisco and Goldfield stock exchanges to $1.65 a share, and then allowed to recede to nothing bid, one cent per share asked. The rich ore "petered out."

There was an indefinable something in the atmosphere of Goldfield—a new, budding mining camp, at an altitude of 5,000 feet and on the frontier—that stirred me, and I decided to stay awhile.

Arkell determined that he would go back to Tonopah and get an option on the control of a mining company known as the Tonopah Home, which Mr. Dunlap had mentioned to him in the automobile en route to Goldfield. He said he would then go to San Francisco to promote it. The reason why he decided to handle the Tonopah Home, I afterward discovered, was that it was already incorporated and stock certificates had been printed, thereby eliminating the delay and expense incident to preparing something for the immediate consumption of the San Francisco public.

"How am I going to subsist here for a few days until I can begin to make a living?" I asked Arkell.

"How am I going to get back to Tonopah and from there to San Francisco?" Arkell asked me.

At the moment we stood in front of the Goldfield Bank and Trust Company's building—a tin bank literally as well as figuratively. It was constructed of corrugated iron and tin. A few months later, when the bank went up the flume, the cash balance found in the safe aggregated 80 cents.

"You take me into this bank and introduce me, and I will cash a check," he said.

"A check on what?" I asked.

"On my bank in Canajoharie, New York," he said. "I was born and brought up there, and they wouldn't let one of my checks go to protest. Besides, I can get back to 'Frisco and protect it by telegraph, if necessary, before it reaches Canajoharie."

We entered the bank. I introduced myself to the cashier as an Eastern newspaper man, and then introduced W. J. Arkell as the former publisher of *Leslie's Weekly*, *Judge*, and so on.

After a brief parley, Arkell exchanged his paper for real money to the amount of $50. On leaving the bank, I said:

"Now, Bill, come across! I'm flat broke, on the desert."

He handed me $15. I was satisfied, because he needed all of the $35 to get back to civilization.

AFTER Arkell's departure for Tonopah I went to the office of the Goldfield *News* and asked for a job. I got it, at $10 a day. My first assignment was to interview an old miner named Tom Jaggers. I wrote what I considered a first-class human-interest story, and handed it to the owner and editor, "Jimmy" O'Brien. He thought it was fair writing, but not the sort of matter the Goldfield *News* wanted. It wanted technical mining stuff. Of course I didn't know a winze from a windlass, nor a shaft from a stope, and some of the weird yarns I handed in about mine developments certainly did make Mr. O'Brien jump sideways at times.

Within a week I was discharged for incompetency.

I was not at all appalled at losing my job on the Goldfield *News*. I had begun to like the life and was convinced there were some real gold mines in the camp. I was a tenderfoot and knew little or nothing about the mining business, but the visible aspect of shipment upon shipment of high-grade ore leaving the camp by mule-team was convincing. What probably impressed me most was the evident sincerity of the trail-blazers who had been on the ground since the day the camp was born. These men had suffered all kinds of hardships to hold their ground and make a go of a camp which, when discovered, was situated 100 miles from a railroad station and at least 25 miles from a water-supply. Tradition said that men had died of thirst on the very spot where Goldfield was now adding daily to the world's wealth.

My environment became an inspiration.

There were a few brokerage houses doing business with the outside world, and the idea of starting an advertising agency appealed to me strongly.

Failing to locate a furniture store I ordered a long, rough, pine-board table made by a carpenter, rented desk-room from the

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Goldfield Bank and Trust Company right in front of the cashier's counter, and secured the services of an expert male stenographer from Cripple Creek. The Goldfield-Tonopah Advertising Agency was born.

BEGINNING THE ADVERTISING BUSINESS

THE idea of applying to the American Newspaper Publishers' Association for recognition did not occur to me. I did not know that such was the practise of agents. I did believe, however, from my ad-writing experience with the Maxim & Gay Company, in New York, that I could write money-getting advertising copy. Further, my experience in making contracts with advertising agents for the publication of Maxim & Gay's advertising in the newspapers throughout the land had, it seemed, conveyed to me sufficient information regarding that end of the business to fortify me in my new field.

Next morning I entered the office of the Mims-Sutro Company, a newly established brokerage firm, and urged advertising.

"We are already spending about $100 a month," said the manager.

"One hundred dollars a month!" I exclaimed. "Why, you ought to be spending that much every hour!"

At first they thought me a fanatic on the subject, but within a fortnight I succeeded in inducing them to spend $1,000 in a single day for advertising. It was not, however, until after I had shown them how to follow up their correspondence successfully that they began to believe in me. I wired to nearly all of the important city newspapers throughout the country for rates. After obtaining their replies I decided to spend $500 in the Chicago Sunday *American*, and $500 in the San Francisco *Examiner* in one issue. I forwarded the copy with the money, and it appeared promptly. The results were good—so good, indeed, that within two months the Mims-Sutro Company was spending at the rate of from $5,000 to $10,000 a week for advertising, and my commissions amounted to thousands.

My contracts with the advertisers required them to pay me one-time rates, and my contracts with the publishers permitted me to send in copy at long-time rates, and the profit was about 45 per cent. And inasmuch as I always sent cash with the order, my copy was in great demand. Indeed, my agency was fairly inundated day after day with blank contracts from newspapers all over the country, the managers of which were clamoring for the Goldfield business. In addition to the Mims-Sutro account, I soon had many others; in fact, I had all the others. Within six months after my arrival in Goldfield my agency netted me $65,000.

MY SECOND best customer was January Jones, the noted Welsh miner, and later, when the corporation of Patrick, Elliott & Camp swung into business as promoters, I placed its advertising. I held it, too, until the death of C. H. Elliott, when the control of that firm fell into other hands and it ultimately went out of business. In the course of three years my advertising agency inserted in the neighborhood of $1,000,000 worth of advertising in the newspapers of the United States, chiefly those of the big cities, and all of the advertising made money. It simply had to make money, because the brokers who did the advertising had little or nothing to begin operations with except the mines, and the mines were not their property.

The most remarkable feature of that advertising campaign to me was that I had never been a stock-broker, had never been a mine-promoter, and had never been in a mining camp before; but still, despite my utter lack of knowledge, to begin with, of the technical end of the business, my advertisements pulled in the dollars.

I was an enthusiast. I believed in the merits of the camp, and my enthusiasm undoubtedly carried itself to the readers of my advertisements. But the tone of the advertising copy did not entirely explain my success in bringing the money into Goldfield. The stock offerings undoubtedly *struck a popular chord*. Tens of thousands of people who for years had been imbibing the daily financial chronicles of the newspapers, but whose incomes were not sufficient to permit them to indulge in stock-market speculation in rails and industrials, found in cheap mining stocks the thing they were looking for—an opportunity for those with limited capital to give full play to their gambling, or speculative, instinct.

Time and again promotions were almost completely subscribed by telegraph in advance of mail responses reaching Goldfield; and it frequently needed but the publica-

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tion of a half-page advertisement in 40 or 50 big city newspapers, of a Sunday, to bring to Goldfield by wire before Monday night sufficient reservations to guarantee oversubscription in a few days.

It was easy to give full play to a penchant for experimenting, in the evolution of mining-stock promotion in Goldfield. The old system, and the one which recently has enjoyed much vogue among financial advertisers, was to endeavor first to get names of investors rather than immediate results from the advertisements, and to follow them up by correspondence. In spending the first $1,000 appropriated for advertising from Goldfield, I split the money between two newspapers on one day. I constructed large display advertisements and appealed for direct, quick replies. This succeeded.

BUILDING GOLD MINES WITH PUBLICITY

A LITTLE later I organized a news bureau as an adjunct of the advertising agency.

It is acknowledged that this news bureau accomplished much for Nevada. As a matter of fact, it is generally conceded by Goldfield pioneers and by mining-stock brokers throughout the country that the news bureau was directly responsible for bringing into the State of Nevada tens of millions of dollars for investment, and was indirectly responsible for the opening up of the Mohawk and other great gold mines of the Goldfield camp and of the State.

The prospectors who located Goldfield were without means. George Wingfield, the man who is now president of the great Goldfield Consolidated, came into the mining camps with only $150. No funds of consequence were available from home sources. The money that later made Goldfield the "greatest gold camp on earth" came from the outside, and the news bureau secured it by focusing the attention of the American public on the great speculative possibilities of investments in the mining securities and leases of the camp. One of the leases, known as the Hayes-Monnette, operated with Chicago money, afterward opened up the great Mohawk ore deposit at a period when there was no money in the treasury of the Mohawk Mining Company to do its own development work. And there are scores of other instances which bear me out.

I was head of the news bureau, and the news bureau was Nevada's publicity agent. I am proud of that achievement. No one contributed a dollar to the news bureau except myself.

THAT news bureau, with its headquarters on the desert, at a time when water was commanding $4 a barrel in Goldfield and coal could not be obtained in the camp for love or money, was operated with as much calculating judgment as it could have been were it subsidized by the most powerful interests in America. Human-interest stories that were written around the camp, its mines and its men, were turned out every day by competent newspaper men. These were forwarded to the daily newspapers in the big cities of the East and West for publication in the news columns.

Most of the stories were accepted and published. Whenever hesitancy was observed, publishers were tempted by the news bureau with large advertising copy to continue to give the camp publicity.

Of such great assistance in arousing public interest did I find this work that noted magazinists like James Hopper were imported to camp and pressed into service by the news bureau to write readable stories. At times, when public interest appeared to lag, the wires were used by the camp's newspaper correspondents to obtain publicity for all kinds of sensational happenings that were common on the desert. Reports of gold discoveries, high play at gaming-tables, stampedes, hold-ups, narrow escapes, murders, and so forth, real and occasionally unreal, were used to rouse the public's attention to the fact that a mining camp called Goldfield was on the horizon.

I felt confident that the speculating public was going to make a great big "killing" in Goldfield. Tonopah, twenty-six miles to the north, was making good in a wonderful way. It had already enriched Philadelphia investors to the extent of millions. I could see no reason why Goldfield should not at least duplicate the history of Tonopah. Never in my life had I lived in an environment that inspirited me as this one. The visages of those around me were, as a rule, roughly hewn; the features of many were marked with all the blemishes that had been put upon them by time, by sleepless nights, by anxiety and by contact with the elements; but courage, sincerity and honesty

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of purpose were in every line of their faces.

I became imbued with the idea that investors who put their money into Goldfield stocks were not only going to get an honest run for their money, in that the mines were going to be developed and many would make good, but that the opportunity for money-making, if embraced by the public at that time, would earn a great reputation for the man who educated the public to a full understanding of the situation.

THE MERCURY OF SPECULATION

MINING-STOCK speculators and investors at a distance who responded to the red-hot publicity campaign which marked those early days of Goldfield rolled up enormous profits, and I made no mistake. The big losses came eighteen months later as a result of a madness of mining-stock speculation which followed on the heels of the great Mohawk boom and the merger of various Goldfield producers into a $36,000,000 corporation. This was taken advantage of by "wild-catters" in every big city of the country, and the public was fleeced to a finish. But of this more and a plenty later.

In those early days my agency advertised Goldfield Laguna at 15 cents per share in order to finance the company for mine operations. Within a year thereafter Goldfield Laguna sold at $2 a share on the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and was absorbed by the Goldfield Consolidated at that figure. And there were many others which duplicated or exceeded the market performance of Laguna.

At the time of which I tell, Goldfield was about a year old. A population of about 1,500 had gathered there from all sections of the country. There were mining experts from Salt Lake, San Francisco and Colorado, and miners from every part of the Western mining empire; saloon-keepers from Alaska and Mexico; real-estate brokers from practically every Western State and a scattering of "tin-horns." It was about as motley a gathering as one could find anywhere in the world, but compositely they were a sturdy lot.

The camp was enjoying its maiden boom. In sixty days real-estate values had jumped from $25 for a lot on Main Street to $5,500. Roughly constructed business houses banked the main thoroughfare for two or three blocks. The heavy traffic incident to hauling in supplies from Tonopah had ground the dirt of the street into an impalpable mass of dust to the depth of fifteen inches, and the unchecked winds of the desert, sweeping from the Sierra Nevadas to the high uplifts east of Goldfield, whipped the dust into blinding clouds that daily made life almost unendurable.

Practically the entire population was housed in tents that dotted the foothills. At night-time these presented the appearance of an army encampment. Provisions were scarce and barely met the requirements. The principal eating-place was the Mocha Café, which consisted of a 14 by 18 tent with an earthen floor and a roughly constructed lunch-counter. Here men stood in line for hours, waiting to pay a dollar for a dirty cup of coffee, a small piece of salty ham and two eggs that had long survived the hens that laid them.

The popular rendezvous was the Northern saloon and gambling house, owned and managed by "Tex" Rickard and associates. Here fully seventy-five per cent. of the camp's male population gathered nightly and played faro, roulette and stud-poker, talked mines and mining, sold properties, and shielded themselves from the blasts that came with piercing intensity from the snow-capped peaks of the Sierras. The brokers of the camp gathered every night in the Northern and held informal sessions, frequently trading to the extent of 30,000 or 40,000 shares of the more active stocks.

THE mining stocks which were advertised through my agency in those early Goldfield days were generally of the 10, 20 and 30-cent variety. The incorporators of nearly every company were enthusiastic on the point of their "prospect" making good, but I argued to myself that if the chances of any mining prospect of this character making good were only about one in 25 or one in 50, and my agency advertised 25 or 50 companies of the average quality, and one of them made good in a handsome way, he who purchased an equal number of shares in each would "break even" with the profits from the one winner.

Later this principle was "knocked into a cocked hat" for conservatism by Mohawk of Goldfield advancing from 10 cents to $20 a share, proving that if Mohawk had been one among 50 companies, the shares of

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which were purchased by an investor at 10 cents, he would have won handsomely. Early purchasers of Mohawk got 200 to 1 for their money, many times more than can usually be won on a long shot at the horse-races, and not very much less than was formerly won by lucky prize-winners in the Louisiana Lottery. And Mohawk was only one of a dozen of the early ones which advanced in price more than 1,000 per cent.

At this early stage in Goldfield, "wild-catting" was not indulged in from the camp, unless this long-shot gambling in shares of "prospects" can by a grave stretch of imagination be termed such, the promoter-brokers being able to offer stocks in near-by properties. Among the winners were Red Top, which advanced within two years thereafter from 8 cents to $5.50 per share; Daisy, which sky-rocketed from 10 cents to $6; Goldfield Mining, which soared in the same period from 10 cents to $2; Laguna, which went from 15 cents to $2; Jumbo, which improved from 50 cents to $5; Jumbo Extension, which rose from 15 cents to above $3; Great Bend, which jumped from 20 cents to around $2.50; Silver Pick, which moved up from 10 cents to $2.65; Atlanta, which was promoted at 10 and 15 cents and sold up to $1.25; Kewanas, which was boosted from 25 cents to $2.25, and others. "Wild-catting" was prosecuted in Goldfield's fair name in those days, however, with Denver as the headquarters of the swindlers.

Eighteen months later, when the Mohawk mine of Goldfield was in the midst of its sensational half-year of production at the rate of $1,000,000 a month, and the great Goldfield Consolidated was in the course of organization, "wild-catting" became general from office buildings in the large cities. There were more than 2000 companies incorporated during this later period, not one of which made good, and the public lost from $150,000,000 to $200,000,000 as the result of this operation alone. Fully $150,000,000 more was lost by the ballooning of listed Goldfield stocks at the same time.

But I am ahead of my story.

It was late in the Spring of 1905. I had been at work in Goldfield more than six months, and my campaign of publicity was beginning to gather momentum. The mines, however, were not keeping lively pace. The Mohawk was yet unknown and the early producers were not furnishing fresh sensations.

THE BIRTH OF BULLFROG

AT THIS juncture the new mining camp of Bullfrog, 65 miles south of Goldfield, was born. My services were sought by owners of properties in Bullfrog "to put the camp on the map."

C. H. Elliott, a Goldfield pioneer, put an automobile at the disposal of myself and my stenographer, and we departed for Bullfrog. Elliott and his associates had staked out a townsite which they called Rhyolite. I was presented with seven corner lots on my arrival, to help along my enthusiasm.

There, on the saloon floor of a gambling house, which was the chief place of resort in the camp, I met for the first time George Wingfield, then the principal owner of the Tonopah Club at Tonopah, a gambling resort which had lifted him from the impecunious tin-horn gambler class to the millionaire division (he is now president and principal stockholder of the $36,000,000 Goldfield Consolidated, listed on the New York Stock Exchange); United States Senator George S. Nixon, his partner; T. L. Oddie, recently elected Governor of Nevada; Sherwood Aldrich, now one of the principal owners of the Chino and Ray Consolidated mines, and worth millions, and others who have since grown rich.

They were on the ground and buying properties. Mr. Aldrich purchased the controlling interest in the Tramps Consolidated for about $150,000. It was incorporated for 2,000,000 shares of a par value of $1 each, a year later ballooned to $3 a share on the New York Curb, and is now selling at 3 cents. The "ore in sight" on the surface of this mine promised millions for stockholders if it "went down," but the engineer's reports of probable ore at depth turned out to be the "baseless fabric of a vision."

Mr. Elliott had a large stock interest in the Amethyst mine and the National Bank mine, which were capitalized for 1,000,000 shares respectively, and he presented me with 10,000 shares of stock in each. He and his partner sold the control of the Amethyst to Malcolm Macdonald of Tonopah. Later, when Amethyst's neighbor, Montgomery-Shoshone, was selling at $20 per share,

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the market price of Amethyst was pushed up to above $1 a share on the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and I took my profit. The Amethyst has since turned out to be a rank mining failure, as has practically every other property in the camp, not one ever having paid a dividend.

The Bullfrog National Bank stock, representing another property that looked as if it would make good for a while, I disposed of on the San Francisco Stock Exchange at 40 cents a share, and I sold the town lots at figures, which netted me, in all, in excess of $20,000 for my one day's trip to Bullfrog.

During my stay in Bullfrog I became very much impressed with the Montgomery-Shoshone mine. This was the powerful magnet which attracted everybody to the camp.

I was escorted through a tunnel. For seventy feet on each side of me were walls of talc. I was told these assayed in places anywhere from $200 to $2,000 a ton. I was also informed that the width of the ore-body was more than seventy feet. (It afterward turned out that the tunnel had been run along the ore-body and not across it, and that the ore-body was about 10 feet wide). Some specimen oré was given me to assay, and the returns were staggering, running all the way from $500 to $2,500 a ton.

In my enthusiasm I wrote stories about that property for publication which must have induced the reader to believe that when all the riches of that great treasure-house were mined, gold would be demonetized. As a matter of fact, the stories from my news bureau, picturing the riches of that Golconda, are said to have been indirectly responsible for the purchase of control of the property by Charles M. Schwab and his associates.

THE history of the Montgomery-Shoshone is mournful but highly instructive. For purposes of exposition of pitfalls in mining-stock speculation it possesses striking qualifications. Here are the facts:

Malcolm Macdonald, mining engineer, acquired a half interest in the mine from Tom Edwards, a Tonopah merchant, for $100,000, on time payments. An effort was made to sell the control to the Tonopah Mining Company at a profit. It did not succeed. Oscar Adams Turner, of New York and Baltimore, the promoter of the highly successful Tonopah Mining Company, which to date has paid back to the original stockholders $16 for every $1 invested, examined the Montgomery-Shoshone, and turned it down because the property did not show him any well-defined veins or other marks of permanency, and the ore-body appeared to him to be only a superficial deposit of no great extent.

Many a good "prospect" has been condemned by mining men of the highest standing and has afterwards made good, particularly in Nevada. Mr. Turner's turn-down did not daunt the owners.

ENTER, CHARLES M. SCHWAB

ENGINEER Macdonald incorporated a company for 1,250,000 shares of the par value of $1 each, to own and operate the mine. Investors were permitted by him to subscribe for small blocks of treasury stock at $2 per share. Shortly afterward Mr. Macdonald and the owner of the other half interest, Bob Montgomery, sold a controlling interest to Mr. Schwab and associates for a sum which has never been made public. Mr. Schwab at once reorganized the company, took in two adjoining properties that were undeveloped, and changed the capitalization to 500,000 shares of the par value of $5 each. He, in turn, permitted his friends and the public to subscribe for the new stock at $15 per share. Later the shares advanced to $22 on the New York Curb.

Undoubtedly Mr. Schwab thought well of the proposition, for he loaned the company $500,000 to build a reduction works on the ground.

To date the mine has failed to pay for its equipment.

The company still owes Mr. Schwab about $225,000, the net profits on the ore in six years being insufficient to repay his loan to the company. In fact, the enterprise has proved to be one of the sorriest failures in Nevada. The mine in six years has produced $2,000,000 GROSS, and although mine and mill have been operated in an economical way, the net proceeds from the ores to date have been insufficient to pay off the Schwab debt. Recently the shares have been nominally quoted at from 10 to

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12 cents on the New York Curb. The public's loss mounts into millions.

Investigation proves to me that Mr. Schwab was merely a mining "come-on" and allowed his enthusiasm to run away with him, but the public suffered just as much as if Mr. Schwab had perpetrated a cold-blooded swindle.

I have heard the question propounded by a stockholder, "What possible excuse could a man, with a good business head like that of Mr. Schwab, have for promoting the Montgomery-Shoshone at a valuation of $15 a share, or $7,500,000 for the property, afterward allowing the stock to be quoted up to $22 a share on the New York Curb, or at a valuation of $11,000,000 for the property, when, as a result of six years of mine operations, the market price of the entire capitalization establishes the value at only $50,000 in excess of its debts?"

An excuse acceptable to mining men might be offered were the Montgomery-Shoshone property situated in a nest of other great mines, intrinsically worth many times the valuation placed on the Montgomery-Shoshone at the time of its promotion. "Prospects" of this variety, according to approved mining experience, are sometimes entitled to appraisement of great prospective value when neighboring mines have demonstrated deep-seated enrichment. But there was no such excuse in this case, because the deepest hole in the ground in the entire camp was less than 200 feet at the time the Montgomery-Shoshone was promoted by Mr. Schwab, and there was not a proved mine in or near the camp.

I WAS present in Reno about three years ago when Mr. Schwab passed through the divorce city en route to California. At that time Montgomery-Shoshone had already cracked in price to around $3 a share, and stories were being published in Nevada that Mr. Schwab had been snubbed by members of an exclusive Pittsburg club for recommending Montgomery-Shoshone for investment. Mr. Schwab, in hurriedly discussing the matter at the railroad station, was quoted to the effect that the property had been grossly misrepresented to him. This statement was widely published in Nevada. Thereupon, Don Gillies, Mr. Schwab's engineer in Nevada, who, with Malcolm Macdonald, was believed to be Mr. Schwab's mining adviser, telegraphed Mr. Schwab and asked point-blank whether he referred to him. Mr. Schwab answered that he did not. This denial was also given wide publicity. There was only one reasonable corollary, then, and that was that Mr. Schwab referred to Mr. Macdonald.

In fine, it appears that Mr. Schwab may have actually purchased the Montgomery-Shoshone on the sole representations of the vendor, the interested party, and may have actually promoted the property on the strength of the unverified representations of the vendor. It might be that the vendor did not misrepresent at all; he may have been too enthusiastic only, and communicated his enthusiasm to Mr. Schwab.

Possibly Mr. Schwab relied on newspaper accounts, and promoted the property on the strength of them. A letter from Mr. Schwab, which appears farther on, lends some color to this idea.

Even before this time Mr. Schwab had been in the mining game at Tonopha. His Tonopah venture was the Tonopha Extension. The control of the Tonopah Extension Mining Company was bought by John McKane, now a member of the English House of Commons, from Thomas Lockhart at 15 cents per share. The capitalization was 1,000,000 shares. John McKane interested Robert C. Hall, a member of the Pittsburg Stock Exchange, in the proposition. He, in turn, interested Mr. Schwab. The stock was then ballooned to above $17 a share on the San Francisco and Pittsburg stock exchanges and the New York Curb. Afterward the price was allowed to recede to around 65 cents per share. During the past half-year it has maintained an average quotation of $1.25 per share.

Although the market price of the shares at the time Mr. Schwab was believed to own the control was allowed to be advanced to a valuation for the mine of $17,000,000, the company has since failed to pay as much as $300,000 in dividends, and a quite recent appraisement by Henry Krumb, a noted engineer, of the net value of the ore in sight in the mine does not place it at so much as $1,000,000. The accuracy of this report is disputed, on the ground that the ore-exposures at the time did not permit of fair sampling, but the best friends of the company will hardly contend that the mine has $2,000,000 in sight.

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After Tonopah Extension declined from around $17 a share to below $1 a share, it was alleged by Tonopah stockholders that Mr. Schwab and his associates had unloaded at the top. Mr. Schwab replied that he owned just as much stock after the collapse as he did when he went into the enterprise. This was met by an allegation on the part of some stockholders that while Mr. Schwab could probably prove that he owned as much stock at the later period as he did at the outset, it did not mean that Mr. Schwab and his *confrères* had not unloaded at the top and bought back at the bottom.

The following letter from Mr. Schwab to Sam C. Dunham, formerly U. S. Census Commissioner to Alaska, afterward editor of the Tonopah *Miner*, and later assistant editor of the *Mining Financial News* of New York when I was editor, denies personal guilt, although it leaves the reader free to believe that if Mr. Schwab personally did not unload his stock at high prices, his associates might have done so.

CHARLES M. SCHWAB
111 BROADWAY
NEW YORK

November 1, 1907

Mr. Sam C. Dunham,
Editor *The Tonopah Miner*,
Tonopah, Nevada,

My Dear Mr. Dunham:

My attention has been called to your issue of Saturday, October 26, 1907. To such criticisms as that issue contained of me, I generally do not reply, as it is useless and only leads to further discussion. But your paper heretofore has been so uniformly kind to me, so fair in every respect, and as I have always regarded you as a friend, our relations having been so pleasant, it makes me feel that I would like to make a short reply to the criticisms mentioned, as showing the consistency of my position.

The only thing I criticized about Nevada was the inaccuracy of statements emanating from Nevada. You seem to attack me because of this statement, and the strength of my posit on is fully confirmed by your article because little, if anything, stated therein is true or accurate.

I will take up your statements one by one. You say I bought from John McKane $25,000 worth of stock of the Tonopah Extension Mining Company at 15 cents per share. This is absolutely untrue.

You say I bought 100,000 shares of Extension stock from Robert C. Hall at $6 per share, and paid for this stock with paper mill stock. No single part of that statement is correct. I never gave Mr. Hall any paper mill stock,nor did I buy 100,000 shares from him. The amount purchased from him was 60,000 shares. The price which you state I paid him for the stock is not correct, and, as stated, I gave no paper mill stock in exchange.

You say further that at the last annual meeting of Tonopah Extension stockholders, held in Pittsburg last May, it developed that I had disposed of all the stock I purchased from Mr. Hall and over two-thirds of my original holdings of 166,000 shares. This is absolutely untrue. I am holding to-day exactly the amount I held after all purchases were made by me, and from the beginning, aggregating some 285,000 shares, and I think if you take the trouble to look up the records you will find my statement in this connection to be true. When I originally bought Extension there was also some stock in my name belonging to others, which I subsequently transferred to them, leaving my own holdings of 285,000 shares where they now remain, intact, in my personal possession.

Going on down the article, you say that I purchased control of Shoshone and Polaris for less than $2 per share. This statement of yours is inaccurate. You say I sold a large block of Shoshone stock at $20 per share. This is also without any truth whatever. The fact is that 3,000 shares were sold at this figure, $20, and these 3,000 shares came from the treasury of the company, all of which you will find a matter of record.

It is true that I have loaned the company nearly $500,000 to build the new mill, and I shall be glad to have any other stockholder in the company assume his pro rata share of this amount.

You wonder why I criticize statements from Nevada.

Respectfully yours,
(*Signed*) C. M. Schwab

The general impression in Nevada, as I have gathered it, is that while Mr. Schwab's mining enterprises have been great disappointments to him, he did not lose any very large sum of money, but that the public did. His enemies go so far as to allege that he, his brother, and his brother-in-law, Dr. M. R. Ward, made millions out of the public.

I have an opinion, and I may be allowed to express it. Mr. Schwab, at the time he became a promoter of Nevada mines, was an expert steelmaker. He knew little or nothing about silver, gold and copper mines. The fact that friends in Philadelphia, who knew as little about the game as he did, had made a fortune in Tonopah (on the advice of a man who did know) should not have influenced him. Because the Mizpah mine at Tonopah, promoted by Oscar A. Turner as the Tonopah Mining Company, had made good in a phenomenal way, Pennsylvania stockholders had rolled up enormous profits in the venture. Under this hypnosis Mr. Schwab "fell" for Tonopah Extension.

Later, when Tonopah Extension showed a market enhancement of more than $16,000,000, Mr. Schwab was in an ideal frame of mind to succumb to Montgomery-Shoshone.

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And when Montgomery-Shoshone in the Bullfrog boom showed a market enhancement of $8,000,000, it did not take much argument to get him into Greenwater, which will be mentioned again.

Paper profits were evidently alluring to Mr. Schwab. He failed to realize that his own great name was in large measure responsible for the rise of his securities.

Sam C. Dunham has informed me that Mr. Schwab told him he refunded to his personal friends in Pittsburg, who subscribed for Montgomery-Shoshone stock on his recommendation, between $2,000,000 and $3,000,000. This ought to be convincing that Mr. Schwab was guiltless of any dishonest intent.

MR. SCHWAB'S lack of caution, however, is instructive to the losing speculator. I said in my foreword, in the April number of ADVENTURE: "The public can't hope to win by following the advice of a promoter, an organizer, or a capitalist, who himself loses nine times out of ten, which is the general experience of all men behind all enterprises, honest or dishonest."

Incidentally, Mr. Schwab's mining career points another moral. It is this: Don't think, Mr. Speculator, because a promoter represents the chances of profit-making in a mining enterprise to be enormous, and you later find his expectations are not realized, that the promoter is *ipso facto* a crook. Big fellows are just as apt to make mistakes as little ones. Undoubtedly grave misrepresentations are made every day, and insidious methods are used to beguile you into forming a higher opinion regarding the merit of certain lines of securities than is warranted by the facts. But promoters are only human, and honest ones not infrequently are carried away by their own enthusiasm and themselves lose their all in the same venture in which they induce you to participate.

WHY THE BOTTOM FELL OUT

WHEN Montgomery-Shoshone was enjoying its market hey-day the Bullfrog Gold Bar Mining Company was promoted at around 15 cents a share on the usual million-share capitalization. A year later the price jumped to $2.65 on the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and the stock was widely distributed among investors. Recently it was in the sheriff's hands. The biggest losers in this venture were Alabama people, who had great confidence in the promoters.

Other Bullfrog derelicts in which the public lost vast sums of money were Gibraltar, Bullfrog Steinway, Shoshone National Bank, Bullfrog Homestake, Bullfrog Extension, Denver Rush Extension, Mayflower, Four Aces, Golden Scepter, Montgomery Mountain, Original Bullfrog, etc., etc.

Mining-stock brokers of the cities went into ecstasies over Bullfrog during the height of the boom in that camp. Philadelphia mining-stock brokers fed Tramps Consolidated of Bullfrog to their clients. Pittsburg brokers recommended Montgomery-Shoshone. Butte brokers placed large blocks of Amethyst. Gold Bar was distributed by brokers of the South. New York brokers were behind Gibraltar, Four Aces, Denver Rush, Montgomery Mountain, Eclipse, Golden Scepter, and a score of others, and the East was plucked to a fare-you-well.

Practically every dollar of the millions invested in Bullfrog stocks has been lost.

The cause of the failure of the Bullfrog district to make good was not the absence of gold-bearing rock, for there is much of it in the district, but it has been found that the per ton values are too low to make the mines a commercial success. Bullfrog is situated on the desert and has no timber and but very little water. Promoters and investors did not realize this until mills were constructed. Then it was too late. If the camp were situated on the timbered shores of the Hudson River, the stocks of many of the mines of the district would probably be in great demand at above par.

Probably the most remarkable fact regarding Bullfrog is that its mining securities were more strongly recommended by Eastern brokers of the better class than the Goldfield issues and became more fashionable in the East at this early period in Goldfield's history. Eastern brokers, most of whom wouldn't know a mine if they saw one, then had little confidence in Goldfield; and at the very time when the stocks of the camp representing inside properties, which later made good in an extraordinary way, were being offered from that district, they advised their customers not to buy. The general cry then was that Goldfield was an off-

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shoot of the first great Tonopah boom, and the idea prevailed in the East among brokers that "wild-catting" was in progress.

It was during the early days of the Bullfrog boom that my friend W. J. Arkell's career as a mining promoter in San Francisco came to a sudden end. It will be remembered that when he left Goldfield to go to Tonopah to close up the Tonopah Home deal his cash capital was $35. He closed the deal with the Tonopah owners at a price around five cents a share. On the train from Tonopah to San Francisco he fell in with a "live one" who was willing to back him in his promotion enterprise.

Arkell was a prominent figure for a while as a San Francisco mining-stock promoter. He listed Tonopah Home on the San Francisco Stock Exchange. Then he started in to sky-rocket the price. The rise continued until the stock sold at 38 cents, an advance of about 700 per cent. in a few months.

Then the psychological moment for Arkell arrived.

It leaked out that he had been financing his stock-market campaign by buying reams of his own stock on one-third margin and at the same time selling it, in like quantity, for cash through other brokers. This was equivalent to borrowing 66 2-3 per cent. of the market value. When it was discovered, indiscriminate short-selling by market sharp-shooters ensued. The load became too heavy.

In order to hold his ground and to get the floating supply of the stock off the market, Arkell engineered a consolidation. The Tonopah Home Consolidated was incorporated, and holders of Tonopah Home stock were invited to exchange their original certificates for shares in the consolidated company.

Just then somebody threw a brick. The names of United States Senator George S. Nixon and Hon. T. L. Oddie, now Governor of Nevada, had been published as directors of the new company, and when these gentlemen saw the half-page display advertisements in which their names were used, and were informed that Arkell appeared to be on the ragged edge, they telegraphed to the San Francisco Stock Exchange denying connection with the company.

Tonopah Home broke wildly on the announcement in the Exchange to something like 3 cents a share. I had followed the course of this plan closely, and when the crash came I was heavily short, cleaning up $15,000 on the break.

'TWAS late in October, 1905. Bullfrog was still in its hey-day. Goldfield's initial boom seemed to be flickering. Work was going on day and night in the mines, but for want of fresh discoveries the Goldfield district was being deserted by some of the followers.

Out-of-town newspaper correspondents came upon the scene, and stories and pictures of the camp, labeled "A Busted Mining-Camp Boom," etc., soon appeared in the Los Angeles and San Francisco newspapers. Goldfield mine-owners were accused of beguiling the public. Promoters were gibbeted as common bunco men. Peculiarly enough, Bullfrog, younger sister of Goldfield, which has since proved to be such a graveyard of mining hopes, was not attacked. There men of substance were in control, the writers said, while Goldfield was portrayed as a haven for gamblers and "wild-catters." The stories had their effect even in Goldfield. Leading men of the camp began looking about for new fields to conquer. The rank and file of Goldfield mine-owners had not "fallen" for Bullfrog, but the success of the Bullfrog stock company promotions in the East inspirited them.

The great mining-camp boom of Manhattan, 80 miles north of Goldfield, which followed, owes much of its success to these fortuitous circumstances. I was one of the first to get the Manhattan fever.

W. F. ("Billy") Bond, a Goldfield broker-promoter whose ear was always glued to the ground, now a successful mine operator in the new-born camp of Porcupine, Ontario, showed me a specimen of ore literally plastered with free gold. He said it came from Manhattan. It was only the night before that I had lost a good many thousand dollars "bucking the tiger." Gambling was my pastime as well as my weakness, and I played high when I had the money.

I was as broke as the day I entered the camp. I bought blankets, a suit of canvas clothes lined with sheepskin, and a folding iron cot, all on credit. I packed the outfit off to Tonopah. There I clambered aboard an old, rickety stage-coach of the regulation Far-Western type, and started for Manhattan. We rode over a snow-clad desert, up mountains and down canyons—a perilous journey that I would not care to duplicate.

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The $10 I had in my pocket, after paying my fare, was borrowed money. When I arrived that night at Manhattan, situated in a canyon at an altitude of 7,000 feet, I set up my cot on the snow, wrapped myself in my blankets and slept in the open. There were only three huts and less than a score of tents in the camp.

The next morning I strayed through the diggings. Sacks of ore in which gold was visible to the naked eye were piled high on every side. The Stray Dog, the Jumping Jack and the Dexter were the three principal producers. They honeycombed one another. I questioned some of the prospectors as to the names of the single claims adjoining the Stray Dog, Jumping Jack and Dexter. They informed me that there was one group of claims adjoining that could be bought for $5,000. With $10 in my pocket I proceeded to purchase it. I gave a check for $100, signed a contract to pay the balance of $5,000 in 30 days or forfeit the $100, and immediately started back to Goldfield to induce the president of the bank to honor my check on presentation. He did.

When I returned to Goldfield I carried with me many specimens of high-grade ore. They were placed on display in a jewelry store. Before night a stampede from Goldfield to Manhattan ensued.

A FEW days later I returned to Manhattan and sold my option for $20,000 cash. While I was there I met C. H. Elliott. Mr. Elliott had "cleaned up" in Bullfrog. He told me that he had formed a corporation partnership in Goldfield with L. L. Patrick, one of the owners of the great Combination mine—which was later sold to the Goldfield Consolidated for $4,000,000—and Sol. Camp, a mining engineer from Colorado. The name of the outfit was Patrick, Elliott & Camp, Inc. It was organized to promote mining companies. Mr. Patrick is now president of the First National Bank of Goldfield.

Mr. Elliott asked me to stay in camp for another day until he could pick up a good property which he wanted me to advertise for him. He made a deal with some Smoky Valley cowboys for a large acreage embracing the April Fool group of claims, scene of the original gold discovery. Twenty leases on this property were in operation, and the surface showings were promising. If the ore "went down," the mine would prove to be a bonanza. Mr. Elliott incorporated a company known as the Seyler-Humphrey Mining Company to own and operate the ground.

We returned to Goldfield. I put out the advertising through my agency. The advertisements were of the spread-eagle variety and appeared in the country's leading daily newspapers. The entire issue of 1,000,000 shares of Seyler-Humphrey was oversubscribed at 25 cents a share within two weeks. This was the result of $15,000 worth of advertising, and the profits of the firm were $100,000. In quick succession Mr. Elliott promoted the Manhattan Combination Mining Company and the Manhattan Buffalo Mining Company. Within six weeks the firm's promotion profits amounted to approximately $250,000.

HOW ABOUT THE PUBLIC'S CHANCES?

I ASKED Mr. Elliott one evening, shortly after Patrick, Elliott & Camp earned their first $250,000 from their three Manhattan promotions, whether he did not think the public was entitled to subscribe for this stock at a lower price and at a smaller profit to his corporation.

I recall that he said: "The article we sell is something that somebody wants and is willing to pay for. What we have sold them is worth what we have charged. The fact that we are on the ground and have endured hardships entitles us to a good profit, provided the properties are what they are cracked up to be. The sale of the stocks has been accelerated by your happy gift of presentation through advertisements. Big department stores and advertising specialists in the cities pay from $15,000 to $30,000 a year for that kind of talent, and we on the desert also have a right to avail ourselves of it."

"But suppose the properties don't make good?" I queried.

He answered: "It is not a case of excessive optimism for one to believe that the Manhattan properties will make good, in the presence of such wonderful surface showings; and so long as we are not knowingly guilty of deception, no harm can result. If the Manhattan stocks we have promoted make good, $5 will be a reasonable price for them, and if they don't make good, one cent will be too high for them. So why question the ethics of charging 25 cents per share for

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Seyler-Humphrey when we might have sold it for 15 cents and still have made money; or of charging 15 cents for Manhattan Buffalo when we could have sold it at a profit for 10 cents? The public knows it is gambling. If people want to buy stocks where they won't lose all of their investment under any circumstances, they know they can buy Union Pacific, Pennsylvania Railroad or New York Central. The profits there, however, are limited, just like the losses. In the case of mining stocks, representing prospects under actual development, the public can lose or gain tremendously."

Mr. Elliott, who confessed to me that he often played the horse-races when in San Francisco, then wrote out a list of stocks and prices, representing what he said was a "book" on stocks, comparable to a bookmaker's book on the horse-races, reading substantially as follows:

Stock	Price	Odds
Union Pacific	$165.00	6 to 5
Reading	155.00	8 to 5
Missouri Pacific	56.00	2 to 1
Erie	28.00	3 to 1
Seyler-Humphrey	.25	20 to 1
Manhattan Buffalo	.15	30 to 1
Manhattan Combination	.10	50 to 1

"There," said Mr. Elliott, "you have the different prices on railroad and mining securities, with their chances of winning for the speculator marked against them. When a man goes to a horse-race and plays the favorite, he does exactly what the man does who gives his broker an order to buy Union Pacific for him at current quotations on the New York Stock Exchange. It is about 6 to 5 against the investment making a profit over current quotations on any given day. It is about 20 to 1 against the man buying Seyler-Humphrey making money. However, the railroad stock is an investment and the mining stock is a speculation."

"Do you mean to say that the odds against a man making money on Union Pacific on any given day are only 6 to 5 when he buys the stock *on margin?*"

"Not on your life!" he said. "A margin trader on the New York Stock Exchange, unless he has sufficient capital behind him to stand the shaking-out process which comes every once in a while, has not got *any* chance! He is bound to lose his money in the end. I am talking about people who buy stocks, pay for them in full and get possession of their certificates, and can afford to 'sit tight' with them."

Mr. Elliott was a plunger and lost large sums in the gambling-houses of Goldfield and Tonopah. He lost $20,000 in a night's play in the Tonopah Club, then owned by George Wingfield and associates. When asked to settle he tendered a check for $5,000 and a certificate for 100,000 shares of Goldfield Laguna Mining Company stock, then selling at 15 cents. This was accepted. Within a year Laguna sold freely at $2 a share.

(This incident illustrates how the foundations were laid for some of the big fortunes which were amassed in the Goldfield mining boom. When George Wingfield came to Tonopah in 1901 he brought with him $150, borrowed from George S. Nixon, then president of a national bank at Winnemucca, Nevada, and now United States Senator. Mr. Wingfield's fortune is now conservatively estimated at about $10,000,000.)

SUCCESS having been won by the Patrick, Elliott & Camp promotions, I was considering whether or not much of the money that was being made by the promoters around Goldfield was not due to my own peculiar ability to reach the public, and I even meditated on my fitness to become a promoter on my own account. The best properties in Manhattan, by common consent, were the Stray Dog, the Jumping Jack and the Dexter. These were sure-enough producers of the yellow metal. They were shippers and were held in high esteem by mining men. I found it impossible to purchase the Dexter because the company was already promoted and the stock widely distributed at around $1 a share. George Wingfield was then and is still interested in the Dexter. The Jumping Jack was unincorporated. The stock of the Stray Dog was practically intact in the hands of the owners. The price asked for the Jumping Jack was $85,000. Stray Dog was held at $500,000.

JUMPING JACK MANHATTAN

I WAS again in funds as the result of my profits in the Manhattan boom, and it was again my wont to play faro-bank at night. I found myself being talked about with men like January Jones, Zeb Kendall, C. H. Elliott, Al. Myers and others who had big money one day and were broke the next.

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The second largest gambling-house in Goldfield was owned by "Larry" Sullivan and Peter Grant, both from Portland, Oregon. Sullivan claimed that he was attracted to Goldfield by the stories which appeared in the Sunday magazine section of a Coast newspaper, the copy for which had been carefully and methodically written in the back room of our Goldfield news bureau. Sullivan and Grant were making money, and plenty of it. I played for high stakes, as a rule, and Sullivan always made it his business to be present when I was at the table. One evening I cashed in $2,500 of winnings. The money was piled on the table in $20 gold-pieces by the dealer. As I was about to place it in a sack to store away in the safe of the house until the morrow, Sullivan began to josh me like this:

"Say, young feller, why don't you cut me in on some of your mining ventures? I'm game!"

"Are you? Well, stack up $2,500 against that money, and I'll see if you are."

He went to the safe and lugged to the table a big canvas sack of $20 gold-pieces. Stacking the money on the table in piles of $400 each, he matched my stake.

"Well?" said he.

"Put that money in a sack," said I, "and go and get that big coonskin coat of yours, take a night ride by automobile to Tonopah, and in the morning go by stage to Manhattan. When you get there look up the owner of the Jumping Jack mine. I have met him. He is a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. An Irishman can buy that property from him much cheaper than anybody else. You go and buy it."

"What will I pay?" asked Larry.

"He wants $85,000, but get it as cheap as you can," I replied.

"What? With this $5,000?"

"Yes," said I. "Pay him the $5,000 down and sign a contract to pay the balance in 60 or 90 days; but fetch him back to Goldfield , and have him bring the deeds."

A few days later Sullivan returned to Goldfield, aglow with excitement. Climbing out of the stage-coach, he pulled me into his private office.

"Say," he said, "I've got that guy with me and he's got the deeds. I bought the Jumping Jack for $45,000. He'll do anything you want him to do."

"Good!" I said.

The owner was turned over to me, and I turned him over to my lawyer, the late Senator Pyne. Mr. Pyne drew up a paper by which the owner agreed to transfer the property to the Jumping Jack Manhattan Mining Company, capitalized for 1,000,000 shares, 300,000 shares of which were placed in the treasury for mining purposes, and 700,000, representing ownership stock, in escrow, to be delivered to Sullivan and myself on the payment of 6 cents a share. A board of directors was selected.

AT THIS juncture Sullivan, who knew as much about the mining promotion and mining-stock business as an ostrich knows about ocean tides, inquired what my next move would be. I was in this predicament: I had conceived a rip-snorting promotion campaign for the best property that had yet been offered the public from Manhattan, but I had no cash to present it. Turning to Sullivan I said:

"Do you know the manager of the Western Union Telegraph Company?"

"Yes, I know him well."

"Call him up by 'phone or send word to him that you will guarantee payment of any telegrams I file here to-night or during the next three days; I want to send some wires," said I.

"I'll do it," said Sullivan, and within a few minutes I was advised that Sullivan's credit was unquestioned.

I returned to the news bureau and there drafted a 300-word telegram, setting forth the merits of the Jumping Jack Manhattan property and offering short-time options on big blocks of the stock. The telegram was sent to practically all of the well-known brokerage houses in the country which handled mining stocks. The bill for telegraph tolls was $1,200. When Sullivan learned of its size he nearly collapsed.

"How far do you intend to go?" he gasped.

"Well," said I, "how can you lose? Your friend, Frank Golden, president of the Nye & Ormsby County Bank, has accepted the presidency of the company at your request, and the other officers you have secured are all representative citizens of this community, and, besides, the Nye & Ormsby County Bank has agreed to receive subscriptions. Can you beat that for a layout? Never in my experience in this camp, with all the promotions I have advertised, has the public had a dish quite so palatable offered to

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it—a producing mine, in the first place; a high-class directorate headed by a bank president, in the second place; and a real bank as selling agent, in the third and last place. And it will go like wildfire!"

I labored all that night in my advertising agency on some strongly-worded advertising copy recommending to the public the purchase of stock in Jumping Jack Manhattan. In the morning I induced Sullivan to advance $10,000 to pay the advertising bills. The copy was dispatched by first mail to the important daily newspapers of the country, with instructions to publish on the day following receipt of copy.

Within six days all of the advertising had appeared. The effect was magical. The display advertisements assisted the brokers in the various cities, who had asked for reservations of the stock, to dispose of their allotments in a few days. Within ten days after the initial offering of the promotion by telegraph to the Eastern brokers, Sullivan showed me telegraphic orders for 1,280,000 shares of Jumping Jack Manhattan stock at 25 cents a share, an oversubscription of 280,000 shares. Before the stock books were printed and delivered from the printing office, we were, in fact, oversold.

That week and the next, Sullivan gave me *carte blanche* to speculate in mining stocks with partnership money, and within a fortnight we had made another small fortune from Manhattan securities. These were advancing in price on the San Francisco Stock Exchange by leaps and bounds.

I RECALL one overnight winning that we made, amounting to about $12,000, which came so easy I felt almost ashamed to take the money. Manhattan Seyler-Humphrey stock, promoted by Patrick, Elliott & Camp at 25 cents per share, was now listed on the Goldfield and San Francisco stock exchanges. It was in fair demand at 30 cents.

A dispatch reached Goldfield from New York, purporting to be signed by John W. Gates, reading as follows:

"At what price will you give me an option good 48 hours on 200,000 shares of Manhattan Seyler-Humphrey? Answer to Hotel Willard, Washington, to-night."

This was to Patrick, Elliott & Camp. Within half an hour a half-dozen similar messages reached other Goldfield brokers.

I happened to be in the office of Patrick, Elliott & Camp when the first telegram was received, and I lost no time in going out on the street and annexing all the Goldfield offerings of the stock at current quotations. At first Lou Bleakmore, manager for Patrick, Elliott & Camp, "smelled a rat," but when he learned that I was buying the stock he became convinced that John W. Gates really wanted some Seyler-Humphrey, and he shot buying orders into San Francisco.

Personally I considered the message a snare. Somebody in the East, I guessed, had bitten off a block of Seyler-Humphrey at around 25 cents when it was promoted a few weeks prior and had made up his mind that he would turn a trick. The Goldfield brokers having received telegrams, I guessed that the same message had been sent to brokers in San Francisco, where the stock was also listed. It seemed to me that an advance would surely be recorded on the following day. Sure enough, the next morning the stock advanced to 38 cents a share, and the market boiled. At this figure, and a little higher, I unloaded in the neighborhood of 100,000 shares in Goldfield and San Francisco. A good deal of this stock had been picked up by me the night before. But I recall that one block of 10,000 shares had been allotted to me weeks before at the brokers' price of 20 cents, and another block of 10,000 shares had been given me as a bonus for my publicity measures.

After turning over to the treasury of the Jumping Jack Manhattan Mining Company the amount netted from the sale of treasury stock, and paying off the amount still due on the original purchase price, Sullivan and I, within three weeks of my little dare, had cleaned up a net profit of $250,000.

"Do you want a cut?" I asked Sullivan when our joint profits reached the quarter-million mark.

"No, I'm game. Stay with it."

Next day the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company, destined to make and lose millions in the great Goldfield boom that followed and to mold for me an exciting career as a promoter, was formed with a paid-up capital of $250,000. Sullivan was made president and I vice-president and general manager.

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The Blunder of Lavender Bill

by M·J·PHILLIPS

"I HAVE lost twelve thousand dollars in diamonds," repeated Beverly Coles.

Bunk McGann lighted a cigarette, inhaled, and forced two feathers of smoke through his freckled nose. "Aside from that you're all right, ain't yuh?" he queried indifferently.

Coles stiffened. "It's not a matter to joke about," he said.

"Well, if you don't like it, go somewhere else," suggested Dan McGann, as listlessly as his brother. "We didn't send for you, did we?"

"I came because my partner has heard of your achievements and strongly recommended you. I wanted to go to the police, but he said that, while you were rather irregular deputy sheriffs, —"

"Irregular is right," conceded Bunk,

"—you had done some fine work."

"You want us to handle your case, then?" demanded Bunk.

"Yes."

"Drop this 'Me good fellah' stuff and let's get down to cases. You can't hand us anything—see? We don't have to stand for it."

"I meant no offense——" began Coles, puzzled and resentful that these ordinary persons with their rough clothing, broad, coarse faces and red hair should deny his moral, mental and financial superiority.

"Well, get rid of the idea you're doin' us a favor by talkin' to us," broke in Dan pointedly, "because you ain't. Where was the sparklers when they was hooked?"

"In the safe at my house."

"Did they blow the safe?"

"No; either the safe was accidentally left unlocked or the thief knew the combination."

"Or else he listened to the tumblers fallin'," supplemented Bunk. "House broke into?"

"No."

"Must have been some of the servants, eh?"

"Apparently," agreed Coles.

"Well, we better go down and look it

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over," said Dan, rising. "You haven't said much?"

"Except to my wife and business partner. It was Mrs. Coles who discovered the robbery. She locked her jewelry in the safe last night. When she went to get it this morning it was gone."

"Well, we're decorators, figurin' on doin' your place all over—see? That'll give us a chance to get around and pipe the bunch. And we don't want to know who you suspect—yet."

"I don't know whom to suspect," confessed Coles, as he passed out of the dingy office. He hailed a taxi, and they were driven to his home.

The trio went from the top to the bottom of the handsome Coles mansion, measuring the walls and figuring. In this way every servant came under the closest scrutiny.

From the basement a tunnel led to the garage, and by means of it they came unexpectedly into the presence of the chauffeur, Gordon, a dependable-looking, middle-aged man.

With scarcely a glance at him, Bunk turned away.

"Well?" demanded Coles, when he had led the way back to his library.

The McGanns consulted with puzzled glances, then shook their heads. "Nuthin' doin'," announced Dan, searching through the pockets of his checked suit for the "makin's"; "no one I've seen has pulled this off. Most of 'em wouldn't, and the rest ain't got the brains."

"Have we seen 'em all, Coles?" asked Bunk.

"Yes—that is, practically all. There's the second chauffeur. But he's out of the question. He isn't the sort of fellow you would associate with a daring theft like this. All he thinks of is base-ball."

"Huh," grunted Dan thoughtfully. "Who is he, and what does he look like?"

"Name's William Smith; been with us a year. He's rather a tall chap, with blond hair, and a gold tooth in front. Has a great fondness for lavender—wears lavender ties and socks——"

He stopped in amazement, for the McGanns had bounced out of their chairs and cried together:

"Lavender Bill!"

Dan added:

"He's got yer di'monds."

II

THINGS began moving. The McGanns returned to the garage, Coles at their heels. They prodded Gordon with questions, learning among other things that his assistant was in his room in the upper story of the garage. Thereupon they crept up the stairs and tried the door of the Lavender One's room. It was unlocked, and the two deputies projected their burly frames inside with a suddenness that startled the occupant.

As the tall, wiry Smith rose from the bed on which he had been sitting he greeted the brothers with an oath. Dan promptly grabbed him. They scuffled about the narrow room. Bunk looked on with apparent unconcern until a chance came to trip the chauffeur. This he did deftly, and the Lavender One came down with a crash that knocked the breath out of him.

"Lemme up!" he snarled, with a series of terrifying oaths, as soon as he could get his wind. "Whatcha want with me, you boneheads?"

The McGanns made no reply. Dan sat on the prostrate man's chest and searched his pockets while Bunk ripped up the room with the thoroughness of a cyclone. Every spot where a pin could have been hidden was laid open, but without result. No diamonds were found. As for Mr. Coles, he stood in the doorway, looking pained. He avoided meeting the eye of his abused second chauffeur.

Bunk rubbed a blocky chin in perplexity when the search was completed. Then he walked over to where his brother was still gravely sitting astride of Lavender Bill. He prodded the chauffeur smartly with his toe. "Say, Lavender," he demanded, "where's th' 'ice'?"

"G'wan!" growled Lavender; "I ain't seen no 'ice.'" And he outdid his former efforts in bad language.

The deputy turned to a capacious leather bag, which he had previously examined, and emptied its contents on the floor. There was a white baseball uniform with red trimmings, the words "East Side Giants" printed in irregular letters across the front of the shirt; a half-dozen balls, all showing evidence of more or less usage; and a mitt.

Squatting over these articles, Bunk looked at Lavender Bill speculatively. The chauffeur read his thought and grinned sar-

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donically: "Why don't yuh rip up me bag?" And then, to his employer: "Who's lost any 'ice,' Mr. Coles?"

"I've lost twelve thousand dollars' worth of diamonds," replied Coles, after a moment's hesitation.

Lavender whistled in astonishment. "That's why these strong-arms are maulin' me!" he said, as if he had made a momentous discovery.

The search was abandoned, and Lavender allowed to rise. He brushed his clothes nonchalantly, repacked his grip, cursed the McGanns and left. He had previously applied for a half-day off, explained Coles, and this had been granted.

The brothers made no attempt to stop him, but fell in behind. They did not shadow; they simply followed him. Smith ran for a car before he had gone three blocks. He caught it on the move, despite his encumbering bag. They also sprinted and swung aboard. Down-town he jumped off without a glance at them and dived into a cheap restaurant. The deputies forced their way to seats at the same table. Lavender swore at them roundly, the oaths punctuating his order to the burly male waiter. He ate heartily; so did they.

There was a little diversion at the end of the meal. Lavender Bill attempted to walk out without paying. He was stopped by the hard-faced proprietor and declared in injured tones that he supposed his "friends" were going to pay; they had invited him in there! The McGanns grinned appreciatively—and paid.

Outside again, Smith stood for a moment, enjoying life. He stretched under the bright June sun; sniffed at the air which somehow hinted of the perfume of flowers, even in this squalid waste of brick and stone and hurrying thousands; and whistled the latest popular air. Then he boarded a car.

The hour that followed was not a pleasant one for the McGanns. Their quarry made one attempt to escape them. In an ordinary person, the clever way in which he dodged from car to car would have been convincing. But he was capable of smoother tricks; and, besides, he fairly laughed in their faces when they were again at his elbow after a flying transfer. It appeared that he really did not care to lose them; sure of his position, he was having a little fun at their expense.

"That laddiebuck has an ace in the hole," commented Dan.

"But he snagged the sparks," returned Bunk. "And he hasn't had time to get rid of 'em."

III

LAVENDER BILL'S destination proved to be the baseball-grounds on the dumps. It was more ambitious than the ordinary sandlot ball-grounds. It had been fenced, and an admission fee was charged. A motley crowd of young toughs had assembled for the game between the "East Side Giants" and "Paddy Slavin's Tigers," and they greeted Smith with a roar. His escort, equally well known to every person present, aroused a storm of jeers and catcalls. They paid no attention to this display of hostility. That was part of their day's work. They were at the chauffeur's elbow when he donned his uniform and strutted on to the field with the bag.

The McGanns settled themselves on the "Giants'" bench. The chauffeur set the bag down a short distance away, selected a ball from it, and began batting flies to the outfield, his team having gone out for practise. A substitute covered Lavender's own place on first.

"Ferret Sweers in left," said Bunk.

"Got my eye on him," returned his brother. The Ferret was a clever young crook, a friend of Lavender's. At sight of him the deputies began to take an interest in things. The Ferret's presence was significant; the chances to "get something on" Smith were brighter.

Lavender Bill paid a lot of attention to his friend. Yet scarcely a ball hit to the scrubby Sweers was in reach. Most of them went over his head, almost to the fence. Finally he lost one in the tall grass, and was some time in finding it. When it finally came in, Lavender Bill grunted with disgust; the ball was ripped. He tossed it into the grip and selected another.

They seemed to be a poor lot of balls. Three times ripped ones were exchanged. When, after another muff by Sweers, the recovered sphere came bounding in, Bunk, who had risen to swing a likely-looking bat, intercepted it. He made a pickup, and remarking, "Ripped again, Lavender," tossed the ball to Smith. Then he lounged over to the bag, secured another one, and rolled it to the batsman.

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With barely a glance at the ripped ball, Lavender accepted the one offered in its place and hit it out. Then he looked sharply at the McGanns. Bunk yawned, stretched, rolled a cigarette and slumped down on the bench again.

He slid forward until he was resting on his spine. He drew his hat over his eyes, as if to shut out the glare of the sun. When the suspicious Lavender turned all his attention to batting flies again, Bunk said, guardedly: "Keno! I got it. Goin' out pretty soon to get a cop; they may make a fuss when we pinch Bill. See that hole in the fence back of the Ferret? When I flash a handkercher there, get up and take the bat away from Lavender. Hit one over the fence for Sweers to chase."

"Yuh don't want much!" objected Dan.

"It's easy. Ferret won't come back when you do it—I'll take care o' him. When Lavender starts out to look for his pal, let him go. The cop'll be waitin'. In case o' doubt, you snag the bag when he fades, and follow him."

Bunk rose and began lounging away. As he passed Lavender he whirled suddenly and jolted the batsman in the ribs with a short-arm jab that all but lifted the lanky Smith from his feet. Lavender, recovering his balance, struck savagely at McGann with his club, but the deputy evaded the blow. The spectators howled threateningly and began scrambling off the bleachers.

The deputy did not so much as look at them, but continued his languid stroll to the gates. Lavender Bill looked after him, as if contemplating an assault with the club. Then he laughed jeeringly and returned to his batting. Seeing that their idol was not desirous of revenge, the mob subsided, though a fusilade of abuse followed the leisurely Bunk.

That blow was an artistic triumph for the deputy. Had he left the field without paying any attention to the chauffeur, the latter would have become suspicious. Had he struck too hard, Lavender would have retaliated, and a free fight would have followed. In either event, their object would have been defeated.

Bunk meant the blow to convey to the chauffeur that they had failed to connect him with the loss of the diamonds, and as a result he was taking what revenge he dared.

Lavender's laugh proved that he had interpreted the blow precisely as the thoughtful Bunk had intended that he should.

IN A SHORT time Dan saw a flicker of white behind the left-field fence, where the lower half of a board had been broken away. He rose and walked over to Lavender, his face expressionless, a cigarette hanging from his under lip.

"Lemme show you how to hit 'em, Skinny," he said, reaching for the bat.

The chauffeur surrendered it readily with some acid remarks upon the unspeakable depravity of Dan and his brother. The bleachers yowled hatefully; the Ferret out in left field called abusively in his high-pitched voice. Dan hit the fielders three or four easy ones to get the range. Then, as Lavender Bill waved his team off the field, he cut loose.

He tossed the ball into the air and took a short, quick swing, perfectly timed. All the strength of his powerful shoulders was behind it. The ball rose like a bullet, looped gracefully, and dropped out of sight behind the fence. The Ferret expressed his disapproval by a lively pantomime, and trotted to the hole in the fence.

Bunk was in hiding just outside. As the Ferret shoved his rodent head, with its long nose and retreating forehead and chin, through the aperture, the heavy hand of the deputy descended on the back of his neck. He was slammed forward and down until his face rooted into the turf, effectually smothering any outcry.

McGann came down with both knees on Sweers's back and thrust forth an exploring hand. Then he grinned happily, for the Ferret's lean body was girdled beneath his shirt with baseballs!

IV

BUNK opened his knife and attacked one of the balls on the table before him. He ripped the stitches and slipped off the cover, leaving a closely-wound sphere of yarn in his hand. With a conjurer's flourish for the benefit of the doubting Coles, the deputy slowly unwound the yarn. Something clicked on to the table—something that gleamed and winked with a living white fire!

Coles's eyes and mouth popped wide open, for the something was an unset diamond. As Bunk continued to unwind, two more

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dropped out. Then, one after another, he destroyed the remaining five balls. Each in turn yielded precious kernels to the little pile of stones, until eighteen were gathered together. The tally was complete; just eighteen diamonds had been stolen.

"I don't know where the settin's are," said Bunk, his task completed; "Lavender's chucked 'em away. You may find 'em in some hole around the garage."

"But—but, Mr. McGann," stammered the humbled and mystified Coles, "I don't understand how these diamonds got into the balls! If this man Smith is the thief, why didn't he take them away? He had all night after he stole them."

"Because he ain't no ordinary crook," rejoined Bunk. "If he'd been away from here last night, he knew it would be found out. We could have traced him and locked him up on suspicion.

"At two o'clock this morning he came into Gordon's room in his pajamas. Said he had the toothache and wanted something for it. He'd been over there then and got your sparks. That toothache story would account for his bein' up and around at all hours. He had six baseballs in his room then. Between two and five he wound the di'monds in the balls, sewed 'em up, burned the extra yarn and the old stitchin', and then made away with the settin's. At five he had finished, or he wouldn't have woke up Gordon. But he needed a witness who could swear he'd been in the place all night.

"He knew there was only one way to get the stones out and that was right under our eyes. The best way to take 'em was in the balls, because no one would think of lookin' there. I thought of his slippin' them under the linin' of his bag; I was gettin' 'warm' then. But when he invited me to rip it open I was throwed off the scent."

"But how did this Ferret get hold of the balls?" asked Coles.

Dan looked at him pityingly and took up the narrative: "They'd planned this thing all out before, and Ferret had six balls inside his shirt when he came out to practise. Ferret's are all ripped. Lavender hits out one of the loaded balls. It goes 'way over Sweers's head, or else he muffs it so's he can make a switch. He turns his back, digs up a ripped ball and fires it in, and tucks away the loaded one in place of it.

"The rip gives Bill a chance to make another switch at his end, and he does it; but he's always sure to hit the loaded ball to Ferret. Back comes another ripped one, and they keep it up till all your di'monds are inside Sweers's shirt.

"Lavender worked out this scheme because he didn't dare take chances on bein' locked up. He couldn't trust Ferret, or any one else. If they got their hands on the sparks, and he was pinched, they would hock the stones and flit. So it was up to him to keep out of jail.

"By Lavender's scheme, he gets the stones to Ferret, and there's no case against either of them. They can market the stones together. Oh, Lavender's got a head, all right!"

"How did you discover their plan?" asked Coles.

Bunk grinned and lighted the cigarette he had rolled. "I was lashed to the mast and howlin' for mercy at first," he admitted. "I never even caught the Ferret makin' the switch, he was so smooth at it. But Bill left himself wide open."

"How was that?"

"He used the wrong thread in sewin' up the balls. I noticed that when he hit to Ferret the ball went out with red seams—and come back with blue ones!"

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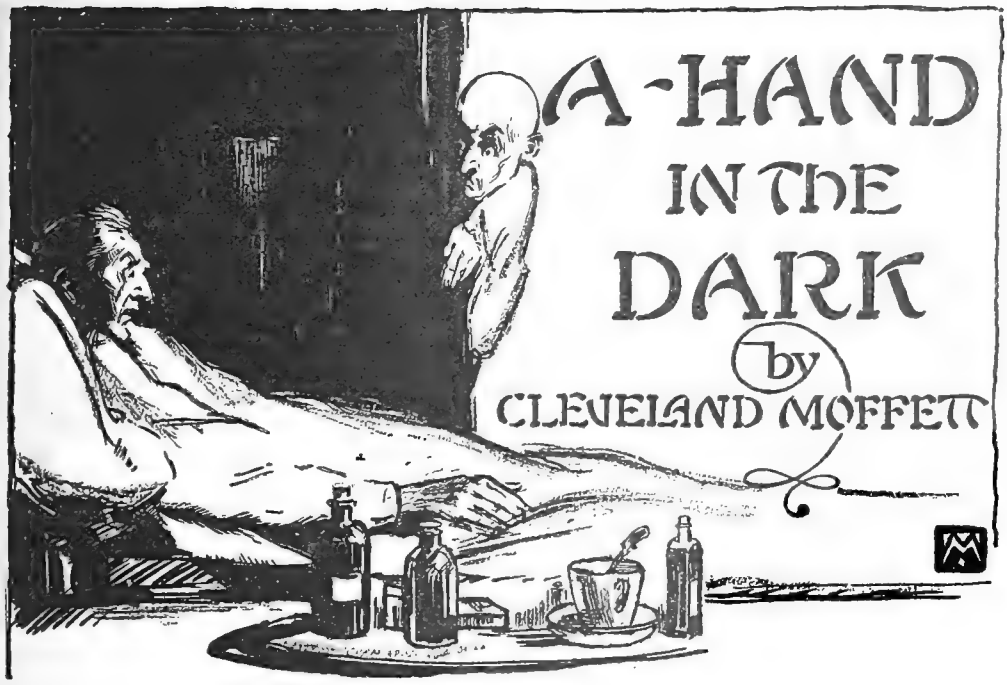

IN SPITE of the great notoriety that has surrounded Gordon Wilkins and the widespread discussion of his spectacular career, I believe that many people are still in doubt as to the man's true character and the motive back of his extraordinary activities. Was he, as has been said, a reckless adventurer, a meddlesome scoundrel defiant of law and custom, or was he a sincere though misguided patriot, actuated by a fanatical hatred of injustice, a sort of modern and successful Don Quixote? For successful he certainly was, tilting at more than windmills, through some half-dozen years, in enterprises that kept New York city gasping at his audacity.

Perhaps a clue to the real purpose of this mysterious man may be found in a study of his earlier steps toward the formidable position in Manhattan that he ultimately gained, all the more formidable that he never emerged from the shadows. I am speaking of the early 'nineties, long before newspapers and magazines had grown bitter in their attacks on Wilkins, or Van Amberg, as he was then known to us in the little circle frequented by him. Whatever his faults, he has paid for them, and, as he was kind to me when I needed a friend, I am glad now to say a word in his behalf.

The circle in question was a sort of Bohemian club, with loosely constituted membership, that occupied two upper rooms of the Jefferson Market building, at Sixth Avenue and Ninth Street, this location being convenient for reporters whose duties brought them to the dingy police court next door, also for artists from Macdougal Alley and the Washington Square region. My interest here was in the homely game of checkers, cultivated by a few of us in the smaller room, while a majority sought the allurements of draw poker, played often uproariously, in the larger one.

Van Amberg was one of the checker-players, one of the best *natural* players I ever met. Had he been willing to study the academic game and master the book moves, he would have become a *great* player, but he assured me this would have spoiled his creative enjoyment, and he always insisted on working out his own combinations. Even so, he was invincible in end games, and I soon found that to beat him at all I must gain some substantial advantage in the earlier positions. In a finish fight with even numbers he was too much for me.

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Now, the game of checkers resembles golf in this: that one may play with a man for a long time without knowing what manner of man he is. His home life, his place in the world, his creed and opinions—all these remain mysteries. He may be millionaire or Mormon—you neither ask nor care, if only he plays the game well. So, for months, my sole concern with Van Amberg was to find adequate defenses against his cunning traps in games from the "Ayrshire Lassie" opening, his favorite. Some of these traps were marvels of ingenuity, and no less than three of them are now recorded in the books (I saw to this) as the Van Amberg variations. Who would suspect that this contriver of innocent puzzles was none other than the sinister Gordon Wilkins!

I may add that Van Amberg never played chess. He told me once that he had played this game in former years, but it interested him no longer. He said this with an odd little smile that sometimes brightened his usually stern countenance.

I WELL remember the incident that brought me into closer acquaintance with Van Amberg. It was a gala evening at the club, one of our theatrical members having introduced a conjurer who amused us with feats of sleight of hand. I was particularly impressed when this gentleman, offering a well-shuffled pack, asked me to draw out one card, declaring that, in spite of any effort that I might make to the contrary, I must and would inevitably select the nine of spades. And, sure enough, it was the nine of spades that I selected, although I dug in deep among the cards trying to avoid this. He did the trick again and again, until we realized that he could *force* any one of us to draw whichever card *he* pleased out of the fifty-two. It is a perfectly familiar deception, of course, but perplexing, nevertheless, when played upon you with your own cards at your own table.

After the entertainment Van Amberg and I walked up toward Sixteenth Street, where I lived at that time—I had no idea where *he* lived—and as we strolled along he put forth a rather startling theory that, as with the conjurer and the cards, so in real life men may be *forced* to act and decide in this way or that, following the will of another person. He was *not* referring to hypnotic influence.

"You mean a person known to them, a person having authority over them?" I suggested.

"Not at all," said he. "I mean an outside person, possibly a stranger."

"And you think such an outside person could make a man act or decide against his own will?"

"That isn't what I said," explained Van Amberg. "The man would *think* he was choosing freely, as you thought you were choosing the card freely; yet he would be yielding, as you did, to conditions created by another person. You see, a man's acts and decisions vary with the circumstances that surround him. As circumstances change, his acts and decisions change. It is certain, for instance, that I, by studying the facts of your life, or any life—your habits, health, knowledge, opportunities, and so on—could, with a certain amount of trouble, change these so that you would make some corresponding change in your plans, opinions or general conduct. Don't you see?"

I was impressed, yet skeptical. "Do you mean," I asked, "that you could *force* me to do what I have made up my mind not to do?"

"There is no violence in this kind of forcing," he replied. "You would simply *change* your mind."

"And never know that you had made me change it?"

"Of course not; you need never see me, never know me. I would merely *modify* the circumstances of your life, *any life*, and your own will would do the rest."

We stood for some time at the corner of Sixteenth Street discussing this. I was still unconvinced. Could an unknown person make me leave New York and settle in Chicago? Undoubtedly. The offer of a newspaper position more desirable than my present one, with a better salary, would accomplish that. Ah, no! I insisted, and here it was that I told Van Amberg of my decision to give up newspaper work absolutely in favor of more serious writing. The great magazines were my goal, and, beyond these, the wonderful region of play-writing. No more hack reporting for me! This was my unalterable resolve, and I defied any person, known or unknown, to swerve me from it.

He gripped my hand in sympathetic understanding as we said good-night and I

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felt myself singularly drawn to him—a strong face marked with rugged lines, a man who had evidently suffered and conquered and yet remained kindly. Much more than a plodding checker-player, this Van Amberg!

I DID not see him again for a month, during which time an odd thing happened. I was prowling about in Harlem one night, seeking local color for a fiction story that I hoped to sell, and feeling rather blue, for my efforts in higher literature had been poorly paid; in fact, during the ten weeks since I had shaken the dust of journalism from my feet I had not received as much from magazine work as I had often earned in a single week on the *Morning Advertiser*. Still I was firm in my resolution that nothing—*nothing* should make me false to my literary aspirations and put me back in that hopeless grind!

In this mind I trudged along until my attention was drawn to a crowd of men gathered about a street speaker who was talking socialism. As I paused to listen for a moment, a hand touched my shoulder and, turning, I came face to face with Hicks, a veteran copy-reader on the *Advertiser* and a stanch friend of mine.

Much pleased at this meeting, Hicks took me into a neighboring beer-garden, where we sat for an hour or so, comparing notes. He told me that there had just been a shake-up at the office, hot cabling from Bermuda, where the chief was on his yacht, with the result that a brute named Creegan, my arch-enemy on the night-desk, had been suspended for three months. Everybody was delighted at this, he said, and all the boys knew that, in my trouble with Creegan, I had been unfairly treated.

After leaving Hicks I took the elevated downtown and, as the train rushed along, I thought over his piece of news with a glow of satisfaction. So Creegan's reign was ended! The chief had found him out at last! That was a good thing. Now boys in the city department who knew how to use the English language would have some chance to get their copy through unmutilated. Hm! Creegan was suspended. And everybody knew I was in the right.

The more I pondered this, the more important it seemed. The chief had always liked me. Perhaps he had wanted to take my part, but when I flared up and resigned, what could he do? It was a pity! And now he was off in Bermuda on his yacht. A great pity! Nothing could be done without the chief's O. K., and of course there was no way of getting that unless——

Like a flash I thought of cabling. I knew the chief's code word, and it would cost only a few dollars. If I got a message off at once I might have an answer the next day. By Jove! I might be back on the paper before another night, earning my little seventy a week as star reporter!

It was one o'clock in the morning when I hurried into a telegraph office at Fifth Avenue and Twenty-second Street and pushed a carefully worded cable-message across the counter.

"Is this your name?" asked the clerk, pointing to my signature.

"Yes, that's my name—Caleb Richardson. Why?"

He took an envelope from his desk and handed it to me.

"A gentleman left this an hour ago!" he said.

I looked in surprise at the envelope, for there was my name plainly written. And, tearing it open, I came upon these words in a heavy, scrawling hand:

> Remember the nine of spades!
>
> VAN AMBERG.

In a moment I realized what had happened. It was all an ingenious mystification worked out by Van Amberg. He wanted to show me the power of arranged coincidence; he had forced me to do a thing that I had resolved not to do! Knowing my money anxieties, he had arranged somehow to have Hicks meet me and reveal the office situation. It was all plain enough except the uncanny way in which he had foreseen exactly how my mind would work, *exactly*, to the very telegraph office where I would go to send my cable message!

"That part was easy enough," he explained the next day. "There is only one all-night up-town office."

It was perfectly simple—his methods always were simple, but I was at a loss to understand why Van Amberg had taken so much trouble for so unimportant a result. His explanation was that he liked me and that such things interested him—evidently an inadequate reason. At any rate, this

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little happening marked the beginning of our long and, I must say, exciting friendship, which lasted for some eight years, up to the time of Van Amberg's unfortunate connection with the sequestration of O'Brien, the Tammany boss.

AS MAY be imagined, I never sent my cablegram to the chief. It was preposterous that a serious life purpose should be abandoned through so trivial a happening, and I went back with quickened zeal to my higher aspirations. Somehow I would make my way in the magazine field, and, oddly enough, my opportunity came through Van Amberg himself and the fact that at this time I was deeply in love. Unhappily in love, alas!—not because I lacked favor in the lady's eyes. On the contrary, it had been my incredible good fortune to win the dearest girl in the world, Miss Eleanor Grey—of a fine New York family, a fortune in her own right, charm, beauty, everything—*and she loved me!*

The trouble was with Eleanor's health. When I first met her—on an ocean trip—she was in the full bloom of robust young womanhood, but a change had come over her in the following year. She began to worry about herself, fell into a dispirited, nervous state, took up fads of diet, and from month to month drooped visibly. Her family became alarmed, consulted specialists, who urged this or that treatment, including change of scene, but nothing availed. Eleanor gradually came to regard herself as a confirmed invalid; she gave up friends and pleasures, rarely went out and, from being a sweet-tempered, normal girl, as I had known her, she became morbid and irritable, so that it was distressing to see her or talk to her. And yet no one could say what her illness was!

The only person who could influence Miss Grey at this period was Dr. Nelson Slyver, a specialist on nervous troubles, with a large and lucrative practise, chiefly among women. He was a big, blond man, with a pleasant voice and easy, tactful manners. However she rebelled at other counsels, Eleanor would do whatever Dr. Slyver wished and would follow implicitly whatever regimen he laid down. She felt that he was the one man who understood her case and could save her.

Of course we were grateful to Dr. Slyver for his assiduous care, and watched anxiously for signs of improvement, but they never came. Our dear patient wasted and weakened and, one afternoon—shall I ever forget the look of despair in this precious girl's eyes as she told me there was no use in our deceiving ourselves, she would never be any better, she could never be my wife? Poor child! She had given up hope. She had tortured herself into thinking that she was not fit for the married state, that she was physically unworthy.

This trouble weighed heavily on me, and at last I was inspired to tell Van Amberg about it, I don't know why, for it was an intimate sorrow, and I had no idea that he could help me. Yet help me he did in a wonderful way. He began by asking about Eleanor's symptoms in precise detail, then about Dr. Slyver's treatment, more details; in short, he wanted all the facts of the case, which, of course, I could not give him. I thought some of his questions rather foolish, but I was struck by his familiarity with drugs and his general knowledge of medicine. He was particularly anxious to find out whether Miss Grey had been treated with potassium iodide. I had no idea.

Van Amberg said finally that there was nothing to be done until he had made some preliminary investigations that might occupy a week or ten days. He would notify me at the club and, meantime, *I might rest assured of his entire devotion.* The words were simple enough, but, as he spoke them, fixing me with the dull fire of his deep-set eyes, I felt a shiver of vague apprehension. Who was this man? What plan was in his mind? Why should he wish to serve me? And what possible interest could he have in the health of Eleanor Grey?

A FORTNIGHT later I met my mysterious friend, on the summons of a note, in the waiting room of the Grand Central station which offers a certain privacy in the rush of its preoccupied crowds. This was the first time I had ever seen Van Amberg well dressed. He wore a comfortable fur overcoat with a wide collar of black astrakhan, against which the contrasting pallor of his grave student's face gave him real distinction. What an admirable width of brow! I reflected. And where had I seen eyes with that hunted yet fearless look, as if the one pursued had suddenly turned pursuer? And that mouth, sensitive and generous, unsymmetrical un-

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der its thin black mustache, yet, somehow, hardened, as if it could be cruel on occasions. Ah, yes! That was it; I had felt the same wild, winsome power in a little portrait of Edgar Allen Poe, picked up in a second-hand shop on Third Avenue.

At this meeting Van Amberg gave me precise instructions. I was to call upon Dr. Slyver immediately and consult him about *my* health. I must describe certain distressing symptoms, invented by Van Amberg, which symptoms he required me to memorize and rehearse until I almost began to feel them. I was to pay the doctor a generous fee in advance and manage to let him know, in the course of our conversation, that things were going well with me; that I had unexpectedly come into money.

"But none of this is true," I protested. "I never was so hard up in my life, and my health is excellent."

"As to your being hard up," he said. "I will see to that. And, as to your health," he paused and again the queer little smile flickered around his mouth, "*we will leave that to Slyver!*"

We did leave it to Slyver and he acquitted himself nobly. The doctor had always been friendly to me, and I now found him most cordial and sympathetic. He showed the greatest interest in my case, examined me thoroughly, asked many questions, noting down my answers in a large book bound in red morocco, and finally told me, in the kindest way, that I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. It was fortunate that I had come to him when I did. Taken in time this trouble was not serious, though a little slow—I must be prepared for that. For the present I had better come in twice a week, and I must start at once on a regimen that would do wonders for me. A tonic must be taken before meals—some little tablets that would build me up.

Well, I took the tablets, I followed the regimen, and *within two weeks I was really a sick man!*

Van Amberg nodded gravely when I told him. "Let me see those prescriptions," he said and, as he glanced over them, his lips thinned into a stern line.

"Good!" he said. "We're getting on!"

I smiled ruefully. "How long must I keep up this treatment?" I asked.

"Miss Grey has taken his drugs for a couple of years? I guess you can stand them for a few weeks."

"Of course I'll do anything to help her, but—I don't quite see how——"

"It's better you shouldn't see—yet," he decided with a tone of finality that ended my doubts. He had so convinced me of his power and wish to befriend me that I made no further objection, but put myself entirely into his hands.

"In the next few days," he continued, "you are to write an article on fear, the physiology of fear. I have made out a list of books that will help you in preparing the article. Do you read German?"

"No," I said, "only French."

"Never mind. I will make notes for you from the German books. And I will give you an outline of points to be particularly dwelt upon. It ought to make a strong magazine feature."

"I hope so, but——"

"Don't worry," he cut in. "You'll sell *this* article all right. When it is finished, have six copies made and send them to the six leading magazines. Then sell it to the one offering the earliest publication. Never mind the price. What we must gain is time."

At this new task I worked feverishly day and night (literally that, thanks to Dr. Slyver's medicines), and a week later six magazines had my article with a request for an immediate decision. A man should not praise his own work, but I must say that this was an interesting presentation of the importance of fear in our daily lives, *the enormous importance of fear.* Therefore I was deeply chagrined when the article was returned by all six of these periodicals. Not one of them would publish it. I was almost afraid to face Van Amberg with the discouraging news.

At this juncture came one of those strange happenings that occurred so frequently in the life of this singular man—a small thing, but it kept me wondering for weeks. I was lunching at a well-known chop-house, when I was summoned to the telephone, which in itself was odd, as no one knew I was there.

As I took up the instrument I recognized Van Amberg's voice. He said he wanted to congratulate me on my success with the *Universal Magazine.* I told him he was mistaken—the *Universal* had returned my article that very morning. He insisted, however, that he was right—the *Universal* had accepted the article. Then he made an ap-

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pointment for me to meet him that evening.

I walked back to my room, rather piqued at Van Amberg's positiveness, and under my door I found a telegram from the editor of the *Universal* which read:

> Have reconsidered your article on fear. Will accept same for immediate publication and pay five hundred dollars.

Five hundred dollars! I could scarcely believe my eyes. This was success beyond my wildest dream, and it was in a spirit of bounding elation that I went to my appointment in the evening.

BEFORE going farther I must make a confession in regard to this article, and I do so reluctantly, as I have always taken pride in the fact that my magazine work has been free from any fakery or insincerity. I have never sacrificed truth to sensationalism. And yet, in this instance, I allowed Van Amberg to convince me that there was no harm in a deliberate deception. In other words, I put some of my facts and theories about fear into the mouth of a person who had given me no authority to do so, and whom I had never even seen.

This person was a celebrated Russian doctor named Goritz, a specialist on nervous diseases, who, as announced in the daily papers, at this time happened to be traveling in the United States. I incorporated in my article what purported to be an interview with Dr. Goritz on the effects of fear in disease, and I made him put forth a rather startling warning to laymen and members of his own profession against the increasing dangers from fear in our complex modern life. These opinions were scientifically sound and made impressive reading, but they were the opinions of Van Amberg, *not* of Dr. Goritz and, as I thought the matter over, my joy was shadowed by foreboding as to what Dr. Goritz would do when the article was published.

"There will be no trouble about that," Van Amberg assured me when I brought up this point.

"Why not?" said I. "The newspapers are sure to send reporters to Dr. Goritz as soon as they see this article. It's just the thing for a Sunday feature. Dr. Goritz will repudiate the whole thing, and then where are we?"

My friend shook his head. "Dr. Goritz will not repudiate anything. He is not in New York."

"But I saw in the papers only this morning that he's at the Plaza, and——"

"I know. There has been a good deal about Dr. Goritz in the papers. Rooms were reserved for him at the Plaza, but he never came—he *couldn't* come,"—there was just the suspicion of a twinkle in Van Amberg's eye—"for the excellent reason that he is making investigations for the Russian Government in Central Siberia! I happen to know this."

It was another instance of the extraordinary pains Van Amberg would take for an apparently unimportant result. And why? After all, what difference did it make whether Dr. Goritz was or was not in New York? Where was the need of this elaborate fooling when other eminent doctors would gladly have allowed the use of their names in connection with my article?

"You might have told me sooner!" I complained.

"Don't be annoyed, my dear Caleb. Believe me, I am acting in your interest. We need the backing of a great authority. Well, we've got it. It's established in your mind, *and other minds*, that Dr. Goritz is really in New York. If we *think* he's here, he *is* here and—now we'll consider the next step."

I mention these things with no idea of justifying myself—I was so desperate over Eleanor's condition that I would have risked anything for her sake—but to show how Van Amberg's mind went straight to the goal before him with a reckless disregard for scruples and conventions. He wanted what he wanted, always; and in this case, as in others, I presently became his willing, yes, his admiring, confederate.

The duty charged upon me now was to put myself entirely in Dr. Slyver's hands, and convince him, by word and manner, of my perfect trust. This was not an easy task, for I steadily developed more distressing symptoms, just as poor Eleanor had, and my impulse was to send the man sharply about his business, and his medicines after him.

He was a blundering idiot, in my opinion, and I saw no use in humoring him. However, I managed to play my part and, some time later, when my article in the *Universal* appeared, Slyver and I were excellent friends, which was what Van Amberg wanted.

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WHEN I entered the doctor's office on the morning after the magazine was out I was surprised to find him, usually so unruffled, seated at his desk with a flush of annoyance on his handsome fat face, and my article before him.

"Ah!" said I with a thrill of pride. "You have seen my article?"

"Seen it!" he snapped. "I should say I have! Three of my patients showed it to me yesterday, and two marked copies were sent to me this morning! Did you send 'em?"

"No, indeed!" I assured him.

"It's not so bad for the popular taste, but"—he looked at me sharply—"I didn't know you wrote on medical subjects."

"I don't," said I. "This is the first time I ever tried it."

"I suppose this Russian doctor gave you the points," he grumbled. "Trying to advertise himself. I saw his picture in one of the papers the other day. I'll bet he paid to get it in."

"No," I replied, with an inward chuckle, "he didn't pay. Dr. Goritz isn't that kind of man."

Slyver sat silent, frowning at the page before him. Then he pointed impatiently with his pink manicured forefinger to a marked paragraph.

"Now this is ridiculous. I'm not blaming you, Richardson—you're not expected to know—but a man of Goritz's standing! Listen!" Then he read from the interview: "'The dangers of playing upon the fears of others is that the capacity for fear is contagious.'" He paused and then read the words over again: "'*The capacity for fear is contagious.*' What in the —— does he mean by that?"

I looked at him blankly and shook my head.

The doctor read on with increasing agitation: "'*The scoundrel base enough to prey upon the weakness and credulity of others becomes inevitably the victim of his own wickedness and is destroyed by his own poison.*'"

As he read these words the sickening truth burst upon me. Slyver had branded himself with his own infamy! He was a cowardly charlatan, a society quack, a doctor who would deliberately *keep* a patient ill or *make* him ill for the money he could get out of him! This was what he had done to my dear Eleanor and was now doing to me! With this sudden realization came a rush of anger so violent that for a moment I could not speak, but sat staring at Slyver wildly.

In an instant he noticed the change. "My dear fellow," he said, coming back to his smooth, professional manner, "you look —upon my word! you look all upset. No wonder, with my pitching into your article. It's really very clever. Here, take this!" and, going to a table, he poured out some brandy.

While his back was turned I remembered, fortunately, Van Amberg's warning that I *must* keep friends with this man. To accuse him now might spoil everything, for we had no evidence—yet. So I mastered my emotion and gulped down the brandy; then, making some excuse, left immediately.

I dined with Van Amberg that evening at Maria's old place in Twelfth Street and learned from him that my intuition about Slyver was only too well founded.

"The fellow never had brains enough to succeed on his merits," he declared, "but he studied women and learned how to please them. The little he ever knew about medicine he has long since forgotten, but he makes twenty thousand a year from his practise. Six years ago he operated on a prominent banker for appendicitis—I'll spare you the details, but the case was bungled. He managed to hide the facts; he collected eight hundred dollars from the widow, but—the thing jarred his nerve, and since then Slyver has never performed a serious operation."

"You're mistaken," said I. "He operated on Miss Grey two years ago. He charged her a thousand dollars."

"Yes, and I know what he did," said my friend. "He made an incision, sewed it up and applied a dressing. That's *all* he did!"

"Give me proof of that!" I cried.

Van Amberg answered quietly, "I have the testimony of Slyver's assistant who gave Miss Grey the anesthetic. This man has turned against his master, and—he'll be useful to us, Caleb!"

As he spoke, the slumbering fire in his eyes burned brighter. "Don't worry, my boy," he went on. "We've got the scoundrel now where we want him."

"I don't see that," said I. "The law doesn't cover such a case!"

"The law!" snorted Van Amberg.

"Besides, this assistant would never testify."

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"He'll do better than testify. He will *help!* Now I'll show you *why* I wanted you to write that article on fear."

We finished our talk at the club and I presently realized with what masterly strategy my associate had perfected his plan for Slyver's undoing. In other adventures I have seen Van Amberg attack bigger game and incur greater personal risk, but I never knew him to spread his net more cunningly about an adversary. And it was all so simple, so logical! *Dr. Nelson Slyver who had made profit by exploiting the fears of others was now to perish through his own fears!* It was worthy of Gordon Wilkins, a pretty combination, and everything was ready for the end game!

I SAW that much depended here upon my adroitness in dealing with Slyver. I had his entire confidence and must keep it; and at each consultation I must bring back the talk to my article and the power of fear. This I found easy enough, for Slyver seemed fascinated by the subject, especially by a new idea, which I developed as coming from the great Russian doctor, that the presence and growth of fear actually *draws evil*, physical and material, evil, to the person entertaining this fear or encouraging it.

"What sort of evil?" he asked uneasily.

"Dr. Goritz assures me," I answered gravely, "that there are first disturbances in the sensory apparatus, hallucinations of sight or sound, followed by the impairment of some vital organ and often accompanied by—er——" I deliberately drawled through my statement the better to enjoy the man's pressing anxiety. I was the doctor now.

"Yes, yes—accompanied by what?"

"I don't see how it's possible," I continued, "but Dr. Goritz assures me that an established atmosphere of fear brings *adverse happenings* to the person living in it."

"Adverse happenings?"

"He means that things will begin to go wrong."

Slyver pondered this. "He's a queer fellow, this Goritz. I'd like to meet him. Could you arrange it?"

"Possibly. I'll let you know."

We talked more about Goritz. Slyver had evidently looked him up in the medical records. He mentioned books written by the Russian, learned societies that he belonged to, and made me describe in detail Goritz's personal appearance and peculiarities until my invention was exhausted.

At our next meeting, two days later, the toils began to close around poor Slyver. He asked at once if I had made an appointment for him with Dr. Goritz. I replied that the doctor had been called to Chicago, but would be pleased to see him in a fortnight. Meantime I had some notes for a second article that the eminent Russian had given me. They were authentic cases showing the power of fear. A young woman of sound mind goes insane from brooding over the discovery that there is insanity in her family. A man dies of fear on the day predicted for his death, although there is nothing the matter with him. A doctor dies from *imaginary hydrophobia*, thinking he was inoculated from the virus of a patient who had hydrophobia, but he was never inoculated.

Then I described disorders of the senses, hallucinations due to the presence of fear, one of the commonest being the imaginary sound of dropping water. In the silence of his room a man hears a steady *drip, drip, drip*. He wakens in the night and hears it; he stops in the street and hears it; even in his dreams he hears it, *drip, drip, drip*.

Slyver's eyes were glassy, a cold sweat was on his brow, and, when he spoke, his voice was strained and trembling.

"And—and there is *no* water there?" he gasped.

"No water there," I said impressively, "*only fear!*"

For a few moments neither of us spoke. We were seated in two comfortable armchairs. I was smoking a cigar. About four feet from our chairs was a heavy mahogany rocking-chair. *Suddenly this rocking-chair began to rock!*

"Dr. Goritz also gave me some interesting facts about the singular effects of fear in—er——" But Slyver was not listening. His eyes were on the rocking-chair. It was rocking slowly, back and forth, back and forth, very slowly!

"That's queer!" he said. "Do you see that chair?"

"Yes," said I.

"It's rocking!" said he.

"No."

"Not rocking?"

"Not rocking."

He looked at me sharply, then back at

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the chair. His face was pallid. I can still see him gnawing his lips with yellow teeth.

"The singular effects of fear in shipwrecks and epidemics——" I resumed.

Very cautiously, as if he were trying to catch a fly, Slyver reached forth a trembling hand towards the rocking-chair and straightway the chair came to rest.

" —— queer!" he muttered.

It was startling even to me, who could see the wires working, who knew how easily this trick was accomplished through the collusion of Slyver's assistant.

FOR a fortnight we continued these manufactured hallucinations. Things in the office moved unaccountably. Sounds came unaccountably. One day there was the squeaking of a rat. Another day the rat's tail appeared, wriggling out of a crack where the folding door entered the wall—a long, black tail that moved slowly up and down the door while Slyver watched it, clutching his chair. Another day we had the promised symptom of dripping water, which, of course, I did not hear. But the charlatan heard it and, as he listened, his face was a study in haunting terror.

Then came a blow that shattered him. One morning a stranger stopped Slyver on Forty-second Street.

"Excuse me, sir," he said; "you're very white; you must be ill!"

"Why, no," answered Slyver, "I—I'm all right," but a moment later he studied his face uneasily in the mirror of a candy shop.

Then a barber who happened to shave him said the same thing—that he looked ill. And, as he went home, a gateman on the Elevated said the same thing. No man can stand that. Slyver staggered into his office, took a drink of whisky and telephoned for Dr. McKnight, a famous specialist.

"I'm done up, doctor," he said, when his colleague called. "I'm weak as a cat. I guess there's something wrong."

Dr. McKnight made a careful examination and, forty-eight hours later, reported that Slyver was suffering from Bright's disease. He added that, owing to the pressure of his own practise, he would be unable to take charge of this case.

I never want to see a man more crushed, more utterly broken than this wretched quack when I called on him that afternoon. Within ten days he had aged as many years. In despairing words he told me what had happened, how everything had gone wrong; his health was affected, and—he was the victim of fear, he was afraid, *afraid!*

I was almost sorry for him, but I thought of Eleanor and, when he begged, as a special favor, that I bring Dr. Goritz to see him, I hardened my heart and said that the Russian had told me that his engagements would prevent him from calling on Dr. Slyver.

This was the last straw. The man broke down entirely. His pride was gone, his mask was torn aside. He wept like a child, whimpering, blubbering, cowering. It was very painful. Every one turned from him, he said, as from some tainted, accursed thing. There was nothing to live for—he did not wish to live.

I reminded him of Dr. Goritz's opinion, that the ravages of this fear-disease (if not too far advanced) may be checked *by removing the cause.* He looked at me searchingly. What did I mean by that? Nothing in particular—it was what the doctor had said.

Slyver was silent a moment, then, in a dull, listless way, he told me the truth about himself, the whole truth. He knew Dr. Goritz was right, this fear-disease *could* come to a man through playing upon the fears of others. It had come to him because he had done this wicked thing, done it for years to his patients, to me, to Miss Grey, to scores of persons. For a long time he went on with his confession, giving shameful details of operations ordered that were not necessary; of commissions given to doctors for patients brought to him; of drugs used to *create* chronic invalids; of patients sacrificed to ignorance and greed! It was a ghastly marshaling of the most odious facts in modern society malpractise.

"I've done all this, Richardson," he concluded, "and I've been terribly punished. I'm living in hell. I'm ready to make amends—anything! For God's sake go to your friend, the Russian doctor! He seems to understand my case, tell him what I say! Ask him what I must do. I accept his decision in advance."

"Put that in writing," I said. "I'll do my best for you."

It was late that night when I handed Slyver's signed confession to Van Amberg. He read it carefully with a look of immense

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sadness in his dark eyes. Then his face cleared.

"Well," he said, "it shows how a man can control the life of another man whom he's never seen!"

He reflected a moment and then gave his judgment.

"Slyver must give up the practise of medicine. He must put aside fifty thousand dollars to start a fund for checking the growth of medical malpractise in New York City. He can afford it. I happen to know that he can afford it."

"What will become of him?" I wondered.

"God knows!" said Van Amberg. "You see it's *true* that he has Bright's disease."

AS I thought over this adventure (which was destined to bring so much happiness to Eleanor and me) I found myself able to understand all but one thing. With my knowledge of magazine difficulties, I could not imagine how Van Amberg had succeeded in getting my article accepted by the *Universal* at such a high rate and printed so promptly.

"How *was* that managed?" I asked.

Van Amberg smiled. "Easily enough. I found that editors are a rather difficult lot, so I—I bought the *Universal!*"

"Bought it!" I gasped.

"I should say I took an option on it and then sold my option. On the turn I made a few thousands, besides getting your article printed. My dear boy," he went on, as I stared at him in amazement, "there are so many interesting things to be done in this town, so many *big* things, if one only has constructive ability—imagination! I have an idea we're going to do some of these things together, you and I. I like you, Caleb, and—" he laid a hand on my arm with a grip of friendship, "you're not afraid and—you're interested in odd problems, so——" he lapsed into frowning thought. Then suddenly his face brightened with one of his rare and winsome smiles. "By the way, speaking of odd problems——"

In a few quick sentences Van Amberg outlined a plan that fascinated me by its audacity and its characteristic use of questionable means to achieve an admirable end.

"Caleb," he asked earnestly, "can I count on you to help me?"

"It will kick up an awful row in the Tenderloin," I reflected.

"Can I count on you?" he repeated.

Again I yielded to the singular power of this man and, casting caution to the winds, I answered, with a delicious thrill of excitement, "*Yes, every time!*"

(From time to time other "Hand in the Dark" stories will appear in this magazine, telling forth further Adventures of Van Amberg, manipulator of men and events.)

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The Odor of Garlic

by R·J·CASEY

ROLAT STREET branches off from Halsted somewhere below Van Buren, and winds a merry, rollicking trail for two blocks. Then it ends abruptly against the side wall of a big storage house. It is a city in itself, this street, as different from the neighboring portions of Little Italy, as Little Italy is different from Automobile Row. Something of the atmosphere of old Italy seems to linger about it. The noise of the traffic of the adjoining streets never penetrates there.

Even the shouts of the children are not harsh upon the ears of a stranger. Their voices have in them a little of the character of the language they speak, and one hearing them at their play, in the sweltering days of late July, can not but connect their laughter with the lazy heat-waves that rise from the sidewalk. The softness of the one and the silence of the other are so unreal, so out of place amid the grind of the city. Both are so like something one remembers having dreamt about long ago.

Rolat Street had been so for years. New voices echoed between the walls of the dilapidated hovels that pressed for room against the sidewalks. New interests stirred the rest of the Italian settlements. But Rolat Street was always Rolat Street, a piece of the Old World transplanted into the New. Then one day came the Black Hand.

Tonio Malletto was the one who suffered. He paid no attention to the notice when it was posted on the door of his home. He was not one of that class that makes such an organization possible. The grip of the Black Hand lay in the fear it inspired, and he felt no fear. He was only half Italian; his mother had been an Irish woman, and he had only half of the Latin's dread of the mysterious. He had lived in the city for the greater part of his twenty-six years, and one of the city's colleges had educated him. He had learned the power of the police. Black Hand! Bah! This was America, not Naples. And accordingly he saw to it that a pair of detectives were de-

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tailed to watch his home. However, that did not prevent a fire of unknown origin from destroying the place just three days later.

Tonio got little sympathy from his Rolat Street neighbors. It was hinted among them that, to the city's business world, he was not known as Malletto at all. To all but the little community of his birth, he was called by the surname of his Irish mother. They had no proof of these things; but at times the Italian nature is strangely suspicious, and Tonio's loss occasioned little or no sorrow in the settlement.

II

ONE day Rolat Street again furnished material for the newspapers, but this time the story was far more simple, far deeper in its human interest. Before had come the tale of blackmail and revenge. Now it was just a pathetic incident—Giovanni Ferelli, an old blacksmith well known and loved throughout the entire Italian settlement, had dropped dead at his forge.

Nevin, cub reporter of the *Daily Investigator*, arrived on the scene almost as soon as the police. He found a long, low brick building with workroom in front and living apartments in the rear. The first thing that impressed his senses as he stepped into the shop through a side door, was an almost intolerable smell of garlic. It was choking. The big doors at the front of the shop had been closed to keep out the curious ones, and they kept out the air as well. At the first breath he thought his lungs would burst. The place was dark, too, and some few minutes elapsed before the coughing, gasping Nevin could see anything. Then there grew out of the gloom a scene that in the half light was strange and uncanny.

In one corner stood an oil-stove with a skillet on it. This accounted for the fumes of garlic. In the opposite corner was the forge, with a thin, scarcely visible veil of smoke hanging over it. And on the floor near the bellows a body lay still and lifeless with a doctor kneeling by its side.

The reporter was too new at the work to be calloused against the sight of death, but the setting of this tragedy had robbed it of its awful significance. This couldn't be death! It would seem like an act out of a play were it not for the garlic. Ugh! The garlic! For some time he looked about the room in silence, taking in the details of the situation. Then he turned abruptly to the coroner.

"What do you think killed the geek, Doc?" he asked.

The coroner looked up from the body, surprised at the contrast between the youth's respectful attitude and his flippant question.

"Why, I guess it was heart-disease," he answered.

"I thought perhaps the garlic smothered him. I'd die of heart-disease, too, if I had to live in an atmosphere as thick as this. It must be thirty pounds to the square inch!"

The doctor smiled.

"It ought to make a good story for you. You can tell how the old man was cooking dinner on that little oil-stove, and how the dinner burned and the smoke of it attracted his daughter, Lucia, and how she came in to find her father as he is."

"Sure! The beautiful daughter weeping over her dead father will be good stuff, but nix on the onions!" and Nevin again became silent and respectful.

AFTER a little inquiry he located the "beautiful daughter" in one of the back rooms. It was with some surprise that he discovered she really was beautiful. He had not expected the profile of a Greek goddess on an Italian blacksmith's daughter. Perhaps that will explain why he started his interview in a subdued, deferential tone.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Ferelli," he said, "that I am obliged to disturb you in the time of your bereavement. I can well appreciate how you must feel toward me, a stranger——"

"Aw, cut it!" interrupted the girl, and if there was any note of sorrow in her voice, the reporter's ear was still too untrained to note it.

"You needn't worry about me," she went on. "The old man was only my step-father, an' him an' me didn't hitch well. We used to scrap somethin' awful. I'm kinda sorry he's went, though. He was a good old mutt sometimes."

Nevin gasped. The "beautiful daughter" was giving him some new cause for astonishment at every word. Only the barest trace of an inflection tempered her city slang, and her manner showed about

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as much sentiment and feeling as might be expected over the demise of a pet cat.

"What will you do now that you are all alone?" he continued, trying vainly to reconcile the girl's attitude with the popular idea of what grief should be.

"Just about what I always did, I guess. I'm holdin' down a job in a Clark Street nickel-show, an' it'll keep me goin' for awhile. Then Tony'll take care of me."

"Tony?"

"Yeh, Tony Malletto. Him an' me's engaged."

"Tonio Malletto! Isn't he the fellow who stood off the Black Hand?"

The girl's eyes darted a look at him that was strangely out of harmony with her mode of speech. Her tongue might be adept in the idiom of the streets, but her eyes were Italian. The newspaper man knew intuitively that he had touched something beneath the surface of things. When she answered him, he caught just the faintest note of suspicion.

"Yeh, poor kid! They nearly ruined him. The *padre* was good to him then. He was a good *padre* to me, too; he was good to everybody. Oh, I've been wicked to fight with him the way I did! On the level, I'm sorry he's went." And the fair Lucia began to sob as if she were just realizing the horror of death.

The reporter stood looking at her for a moment with his mouth open. Then he left the room and strode through the reeking shop into the open air.

"That looks fishy to me," he confided to himself, and he swung aboard a cross-town car.

III

THE next day Giovanni Ferelli was buried and Rolat Street became Rolat Street again. Nevin, in the *Investigator* local room, read the official death-notice, placed in the paper not far from his own story of the finding of the body. Somehow, it sickened him. "Maybe I'm too new at the game to know," he told himself, "but it looks to me as if I'd be a little bit more broken up over a sudden death in the family than that girl was."

An hour later Nevin was detailed to cover an accident in the freight subway. He got over to the offices of the operating company with alacrity, not because the incident presented any interesting features, but because he knew from experience that quick work makes a favorable impression upon editors.

"I'm the prize goat of the paper!" he muttered as he took the elevator to the offices of the State Tunnel Co. "Dead Dagoes and freight accidents are the best I get." At the time, he did not entertain the faintest hope that dead Dagoes and tunnels might have a connection.

The novelty of the ride out to the scene of the accident went far toward restoring his good humor. It was a strange trip for him, watching big arc-lights gleam out of the darkness in front, swing resplendently overhead, and diminish into tiny points as the car passed on. Gradually an appreciation of the genius of the engineer who had built the tunnel grew upon him. He had lived all his life in the city, yet never before had he realized the magnitude of this work.

"What is the real size of this tunnel?" he asked a minor official of the company, when they were making the return trip. "It must be a mile and a half from the river to where that wreck was."

"It is. That smash-up was only a block or so from the old Rolat Street terminal."

"Rolat Street?"

"Yes. At one time we intended to make that our base of supply, by having the L. & O. Railroad run a siding to us. But we got a better site nearer town, so we abandoned the place. The funny part of it is that a Dago blacksmith bought the building from us at a pretty steep figure."

"What did he want with it?" queried Nevin with a calmness he did not feel.

"That's just what gets me. The building had four floors underground and only one above. I've been waiting for the cops to pull a gang of counterfeiters or cutthroats out of there any day."

For the rest of the way in, the reporter managed to keep up a conversation, but his mind wandered shamefully. There was only one blacksmith in Rolat Street.

"I knew that looked off color," he said.

IV

THAT night, Nevin visited McEgan. You may remember McEgan. He achieved some reputation as a chemist almost as soon as his diploma was awarded. He was a good enough kind of a fellow and as capable a scientist as

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there was in the country. But he was young, thoughtless, and his finances were in poor condition, so he accepted a position with a large food concern and thenceforth came to look upon the pure food law as his natural enemy. There never was another man with his genius for making fair imitations of eatables.

Public opinion and the newspapers finally made his profession a difficult one to pursue. Despairing of keeping the wolf from the door any longer, he ceased being a synthetic chemist and went over to the ranks of the analysts. At the time Nevin made his acquaintance he was holding a position on the local detective force, analyzing some of the very products he had invented.

When the reporter entered McEgan's apartments on the evening of the tunnel accident, the chemist was soon able to discern that the visit was prompted by something more than mere friendship.

"What's the news, Nev?" he asked at last.

"Nothing much," replied the reporter. "Did you read about that Rolat Street blacksmith who died a couple of days ago? Well, that's good and fishy, Mac. The Dago dies, and his step-daughter doesn't seem to care three whoops. She even tells me that she and he used to fight continually. I know that the old man had to cook his own meals because the shop was full of garlic when I got there. Then I happen to mention the fellow she's engaged to and she changes like the color of a bargain-day shirt. She starts to shed tears, and tells how mean she was to her step-father. That would look pretty shady all by itself; but added to that, when I was down in the subway this afternoon I found out that the blacksmith shop is an old tunnel terminal with four stories underground and only one above. It gets me."

"What's the name of the fellow she's engaged to?"

"Tonio Malletto."

McEgan did not answer at once. "I know him," he said at length. "He was in my qualitative class at Lewis. He was a pretty fair sort of a fellow then, and if he's connected with this affair, I don't think your suspicions will amount to much. I guess, though, it wouldn't hurt anything to take a look at the place." Nevin did not know, till days afterward, why the chemist smiled as he spoke.

When they reached Rolat Street not a light appeared about the premises; and no one answered the door-bell when Nevin rang it.

"I had it doped out that way," said the reporter. "Lucia is probably spending her time of mourning at the nearest nickelodeon. It's the window for us."

McEgan forced back the hasp of the nearest window with his pocket-knife, and the pair climbed into the shop. The moonlight made all objects plainly visible—the forge with a sack of coke leaning against it, the cook-stove with the skillet as it had been on the morning of the tragedy, and the door at the end of the shop leading to the living-rooms beyond. Association of ideas caused Nevin's nostrils to quiver as he set foot on the floor. He sniffed the air as if unwilling to believe that the choking smell of garlic no longer permeated the room. But the only odor was the musty dampness that is characteristic of cellars and closed places.

"Where was the body?" asked the chemist as he followed Nevin through the window.

"In the corner there, by the forge." The reporter pointed toward the spot as he spoke. Swiftly and eagerly McEgan examined the corner with a thoroughness that to the reporter seemed unnecessary. Time after time his flash-lamp penetrated into some corner that was beyond the reach of the moonlight. The essential exactness of his chemical training was manifesting itself in this new field. First he went over the floor inch by inch; then he gave his attention to the old-fashioned bellows; then to the forge itself and finally turned to Nevin.

"Look here!" he said, and he flashed his lamp upon two pieces of wire that were attached to the bellows handle. Then he moved the sack of coke that lay against the forge, and Nevin saw that the wires led through a staple on the bellows frame, thence, through another on the floor, to the flue, and up alongside the flue to a point unknown in the gloom above.

"Remember those wires and that sack of coke, Nev," said the chemist. "They're going to be big items in your story."

"But——" The reporter broke off helplessly. His companion smiled.

"It's all right, Nev. I'll let you in on it soon enough. You wouldn't understand now, and I haven't time to explain. We have to locate the old elevator-shaft that used to be a part of this building."

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THEY found it about five minutes later. A stairway had been built into it, which wound down and down as far as the light of the pocket-lantern cast its glow. The basement they searched first, and it revealed nothing more than rusty horseshoes and empty nail-kegs. The first and second sub-cellars were absolutely empty, but the third was something unexpected.

The stairway ended under a vaulted doorway, and beyond the arch was a long, corridor-like room. At the end opposite the stairs were two cells with grated iron doors, and examination showed that at least one person had been kept there not so long before. There were probably fifty chairs in disorderly array about the floor, and several other indistinguishable articles of furniture were piled in the corners. The entire appearance of the place was nearer the requirements of a police court than a blacksmith shop. Nevin looked about the room with his bewilderment growing at every turn. Then gradually he began to see the truth.

"This," said McEgan, "is the meeting-place of the Black Hand of the city."

"I guessed that," answered the reporter, "from the appearance of things. But I can't connect the Black Hand with two pieces of wire and a sack of coke."

McEgan laughed and started up the stairs. "You'll be able to see it all when I give you a little lesson. Let's go over to my rooms and we'll work an experiment."

They went back the way they had come, stopping only long enough to fill their pockets with samples of coke from the sack that leaned against the forge.

"Our friend Ferelli," said McEgan, when they were seated at his acid-stained work-table, "was only shrewd in spots. For instance, he was wise enough to buy that old subway terminal and put himself at the head of a big secret society; but he wasn't wise enough to improve his shop. Look at that old 1492 style of bellows—but maybe I'm getting off.

"You remember that the wires I showed you were attached to the bellows handle and from there ran through a staple on the frame, and another on the floor, and then led up along the chimney?"

Nevin nodded.

"Well, at the other end those wires were attached to the handle that regulates the draft in the flue. When the bellows handle was pushed down one wire jerked the draft shut, and when the bellows handle went back into place the other wire pulled it open again. The wires were pretty well concealed and were put on the side of the flue opposite the anvil, so it's a safe bet that Ferelli never saw them. You know the tendency of a bellows like that one over there is to keep filled up. Well, Ferelli probably noticed that something was wrong with his flue, but as fast as he'd go to look at his draft, the up-stroke of the bellows would open it again, and when Ferelli would examine it, he wouldn't be able to see anything out of order. Do you follow me?"

"Sure, I see what you're driving at. What I don't get is the connection between your alleged infernal machine and the rest of the affair."

"We'll come to that gradually. You can see at present, though, that inasmuch as the draft closed up with every blast of air, most of the smoke was going to miss the chimney."

"I see that, but there's one flaw in the chain. If all that had happened, there would have been a carbon gas in the shop that would have covered up the smell of the garlic."

"You're progressing, Nev. I think you'll be able to see the force of the little experiment I'm about to make."

The chemist examined the coke they had brought from the shop, and selected two pieces of different size and slightly different luster. Then he laid one on a piece of firebrick and shot the flame of a blast-lamp over it. The coke glowed white, gave off a slight smoke, and in a few minutes burned out.

"That," said the chemist, "was coke."

"Don't you suppose I knew it?" asked the reporter peevishly.

"Wait till I get through and you won't be so sure."

McEgan picked up the second piece of coke and treated it as before. A blue cloud rose up from under the flame and hung like cigarette smoke about the ceiling. Then of a sudden Nevin jumped to his feet, upsetting his chair, his nostrils twitching. *The choking smell of garlic filled the room!*

McEgan looked at him with a smile, turned off the blast-lamp, and proceeded to open all the windows.

"There's something queer about arsenic,"

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he said when he came back to the table. "In its metallic state it closely resembles coke, and in its gaseous state it closely resembles onions. If it is hit suddenly with a hot flame, it sublimes, goes off into a gas without turning to a liquid or oxidizing. If there happens to be a lot of air around, it oxidizes and then sublimes. The oxide is poisonous, though the metal is harmless. So you see that when a mixture of coke and arsenic was dumped on Ferelli's forge with the draft out of order, some of the arsenic went off into blue, garlic-smelling vapor immediately, and the part around the edges of the flame probably oxidized and then became gaseous.

"Ferelli's brains were too small to guess what might be the matter. Then I suppose he stuck his head into those poisonous vapors. No wonder he died!"

The reporter's eyes were like those of a child listening to a fairy-tale.

"Then the garlic on the stove was——"

"A blind, Nev, merely a blind. You can begin working on your story to-night, and to-morrow I'll be able to give you the name of the murderer."

V

THE next day, Nevin visited McEgan's apartments, but the chemist was not at home. Nor could he be found the next day or the next.

On the morning of the fourth day the reporter found a letter waiting for him at the *Investigator* office.

DEAR NEV: I've located the man. Tonio Malletto was the guilty party, as you suspected. It's a queer tale, Nev, and gets nowhere except that it excuses Lucia a little for the lack of affection she showed upon the occasion of her father's death. Tonio wasn't known by that name outside of Little Italy. It wasn't any shame for his nationality that caused him to conceal it; but when he graduated from college there was a chance of employment with a man who disliked Italians. And Tonio was penniless and half starved.

Afterward he gained some fame and it became imperative that he keep up the deceit. Old man Ferelli got wind of it, after Tonio's engagement with Lucia, and, unmindful of his daughter's welfare, he used his Black Hand to exact tribute. Tonio wouldn't pay, and the Black Hand destroyed his home in Rolat Street. That was a big loss, Nev. The house didn't amount to anything, but all Tonio's technical library went before the fire department could get there.

Tonio knew that more was coming, and his suspicions were realized when he got a second notice from the society, seven days ago. He went on a little tour of inspection then, and got Lucia to help him, and their combined efforts made old man Ferelli's position clear. Malletto tried to get the police to help him, but Ferelli somehow won the friendship of those who did not know his real character, and the police would listen to nothing against him. They laughed at Tonio and told him he wasn't living in Italy any more.

When you get a combination of Irish and Italian blood in a man it's going to play queer little games with his ethics. Ordinarily Tonio was a quiet, peace-loving man. But when the sword of Damocles began to swing over his head, his brain refused to consider but one proposition—it was a case of kill or get killed. So, a couple of days ago, he half filled Ferelli's sack of coke with arsenic, and fixed the wires from the bellows to the draft. You know the rest.

I know there is no excuse for what Tonio did. It was one of the most cold-blooded murders in recent years. But you can't realize how it feels to have death hanging over you wherever you go. The wild method of killing is something in Tonio's favor. It shows that he was too nearly crazed to be entirely responsible.

It won't do any good to look for him. When you get this, he and Lucia will have been married three days and will be well upon the high seas bound for any place. Lucia's education might be improved, but her heart is as good as any one could wish.

In conclusion, I will add that you have seen the last of your friend McEgan. When Mr. Hyde drops out of existence, Dr. Jekyll must follow. Use the story as you see fit, Nev. It ought to put you solid with the editor, and when you think of me, let it be with memories of the somehow good McEgan who was your friend, rather than the murderer Malletto against whom circumstances forced you to act.

As ever,

ANTHONY MCEGAN MALLETTO

And above the clicking of typewriters and the thumping of copy-tubes Nevin seemed to hear the "*thush-thush-thush*" of a forge, the choking smell of garlic filled his nostrils and——

"What's the use?" he muttered to himself. "He won't commit any more murders, and he'll have trouble enough taking care of Lucia without having to dodge the police."

And the story was never published.

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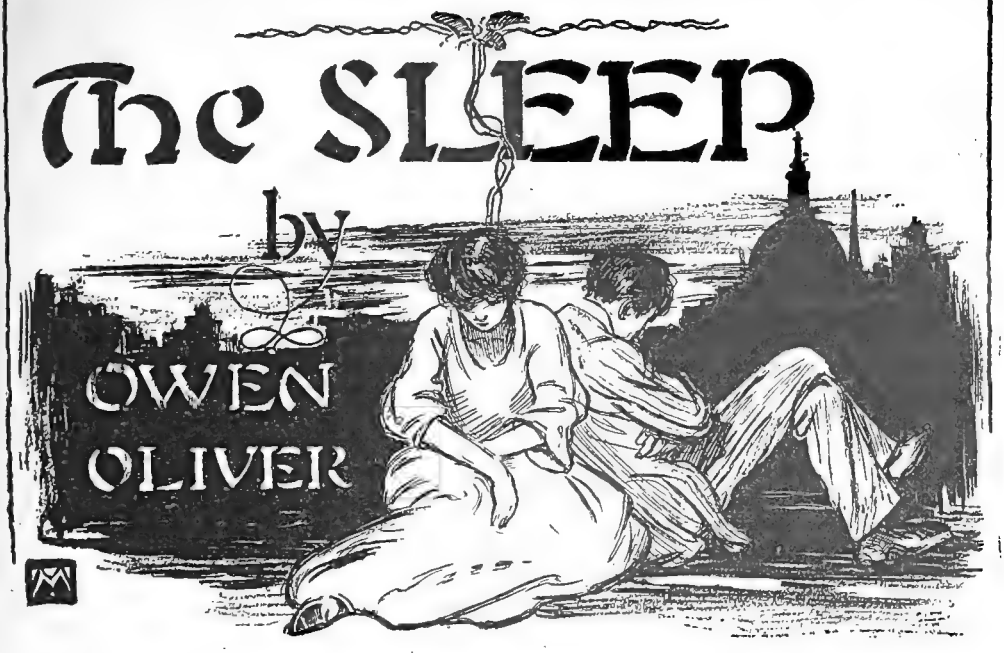
The SLEEP

by

OWEN OLIVER



I AM to go to sleep to-morrow. It is the fifth of April, 1920, and I shall wake on the fifteenth of August, if the Chief Physician has calculated the effect of his new drug correctly, and if the Powers do not order him to prolong my rest—perhaps for ever.

In that event I should like the woman numbered 214,713, London, by whose side I shall lie, to know the part that I have played in her affairs during her four years' unconsciousness, and since the pest of green flies—if they were flies—sent all the world, except a few thousand people, to sleep. So I will write this brief account and put it in her hand.

My name is George Raynor. On Thursday, August 24, 1916, when the flies appeared, I was twenty-five years of age. I saw them first when I reached the platform of Dulwich Station at 9:15 in the morning; little green flies—so I thought—no bigger than a gnat. They were in great swarms. Men were beating them off with their hats, and women with handkerchiefs and scarves. Several people were lying on the platform, apparently asleep. They had not lost their color, and they breathed freely, but they were quite insensible. I was told that they had been stung by the flies, and that the unconsciousness was practically instantaneous.

The man who told me threw up his hands and fell immediately after. Others shrieked, staggered and collapsed every moment—always just after a fly had settled upon their faces. In a few minutes there was no one left standing except myself and a porter. He had taken off his coat and was swinging it round to beat off the flies. He laughed like a madman, and I think his mind was unhinged by fright. Presently a swarm of the flies almost covered him, and he dropped in a huddle. I stood rooted to the ground and, shuddering, waited for my turn to come; but suddenly the flies went. I did not move till they had disappeared in green clouds afar.

They went like that everywhere, when their deadly work was done, and nobody saw them again, or discovered even a dead one left behind. I am therefore unable to give any exact description of them. To me they seemed to be just a swarm of greenish gnats; and they are generally termed "the green flies." On the other hand, scientists mostly say that they were not really insects, but a poison dust which acted through the lungs. I can not remember the reasons for this view; but it is supported by two plain facts: that no bodies of dead flies were found,

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though many seemed to be beaten down; and that no one has ever discovered any sting-mark upon the sleepers.

I searched the platform in the hope of finding some one who was conscious, or returning to consciousness; but all were in a deep insensibility. Some were smiling. Some were distorted with terror. Some had tears still wet upon their cheeks. Many had their mouths framed as if for a word that sleep cut short. Their limbs were not rigid or cold. They simply slept; some with open eyes and some with shut. The open eyes frightened me.

Among the sleepers I found a very bright young lady, with whom I had chatted at an At Home in Rosendale Road, but whose name I did not catch when we were introduced. Her hair had fallen loose and hung over her face—she had probably shaken it out as a shield, and this made her look childlike. She was, in fact, barely twenty. I had found her very attractive and had looked forward to meeting her again. She was lying in the full glare of the sun. I shook her, and held her up on her feet, but could not rouse her, so I carried her to the waiting-room, made a couch on a bench, with some dust-cloaks that people had dropped, put my cricket-bag for a pillow, and laid her there.

Several trains went through the station while I was doing this. The engine drivers had apparently fallen off, or become insensible. No doubt the trains went on till they ran into something. All the terminals were wrecked in this way, as those who wake will see; for we have not been able to provide labor to repair them, except a single platform here and there. Most of the railway bridges are in ruins for the same reason.

I walked over the bridge across Thurlow Park Road, and along the embankment. I noticed many people lying insensible in the road and in the gardens of Croxted Road. At last I saw a lady walking out of a back door—a tall, severe-featured, gray-haired lady of fifty-odd.

"What has happened?" she asked quite calmly.

"It is a fly!" I cried. "A cursed little green fly! It stings people and kills them!"

I knew that my nerve was gone when I heard my voice—it seemed to scream.

She listened to my account without comment or sign of emotion. Her coolness steadied me. "Help me over the fence," she commanded, when I finished. "We will go to the station."

I obeyed her without question. I did not know that I trusted her even then, but it never occurred to me to dispute her leading. Her name was Constance Ashbury, and she was a widow. She had been nobody in particular till that day. Now she is the Chief Power of England, and Vice-Power of the Universal Council of the World. An American Jew, Abrahams, who formerly ran a hotel syndicate, is The Power of the World. If I knew how the struggle between him and her would finish, I should know better how my sleep and the sleep of the rest will end. If any one can save the world, he can. They say that he was once a thief and in prison; but if any survive to write histories, I think they will write him down as the best man on earth in our times.

MRS. ASHBURY and I went through the station to a train which had stopped on the other side. The drivers had apparently turned off steam before they fell asleep. The passengers were also asleep except three gentlemen in one compartment. One of them, a red-faced old man, was blustering about the delay. Mrs. Ashbury addressed herself to him and told him what had happened. He got out of the train and looked round and nodded.

"So the world is blotted out," he said, as if he merely stated a fact which did not concern him.

"Come and help make a new one," she proposed. "I think you are a man!"

"By ——!" he told her, "*you* ought to have been one! Get away from here! A train's coming into us. Run!" And we ran.

Before we reached the station the second train dashed into the first, and both crashed down the embankment. I proposed going back to rescue the sleepers, but Mrs. Ashbury curtly forbade this.

"Sleepers are no use to us," she said. "We want live people to make a live world."

So we left the trains and those in them to their fate. That was when I began to fear her.

We found the horses at the cab-stand unharmed by the flies. (They did not touch four-footed animals anywhere.) We took two cabs and drove to Herne Hill—the five of us. On the way we met only four "wakers," as they came to be called. Two joined us. Two refused to leave their sleeping

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families, and probably perished beside them, as many did.

Half a dozen survivors had collected at Herne Hill Station, which was almost annihilated by the collision of two trains. One of the half-dozen was a telegraph clerk. He had wired to other stations, and understood that the fly had appeared everywhere, all over the world, and that only a few persons in any town at home or abroad remained conscious. A German scientist had pronounced that the "fly" was a sort of radium venom, but that the sleepers would not die, only sleep for a long period—on the average, about five years. He recommended collecting them in public buildings till they woke.

"Wake to eat us up!" Mrs. Ashbury cried scornfully. "Who'll collect food for them?"

"Ye-es," the red-faced man agreed. "They will be a difficulty—unless they wake soon."

"If they don't wake soon," she said, with a quick look at him, "they mustn't wake at all!"

And then I saw what was coming upon the world.

There was a long silence after she had spoken.

"Well," the red-faced man said presently, "you're the best man of us. You'd better take command. What's to be done?"

She turned to the telegraphist.

"Telegraph all over London," she ordered promptly, "wherever you can get an answer. Say that all the survivors must meet at St. Paul's Cathedral, and that the immediate formation of a strong Government is the only hope of saving any one. Let the dead bury their dead. The living must leave them and look after the living. There will be no mercy for those who disobey! Say that!"

"In whose name shall I send it?" the telegraphist asked.

"Mine," she snapped, and the red-faced man laughed a short laugh.

"You will be the power in the land!" he prophesied; and that was how the new title came.

We found a motor-bus driver wandering about. She told him to drive us to town. He refused, saying that he wanted to go and look after his pals. She pointed to the trees in the Brockwell Park.

"Another word," she declared, "and we will hang you there!" And the driver went quickly to his place on the bus.

The telegraphist and I had a little knowledge of motoring. So we each drove another vehicle, hoping to pick up some more passengers on the way. Here and there among the thousands who slept in heaps on the pavements, in the roads, on the busses, everywhere, we found one whom the green flies had not attacked, or had attacked in vain. (We do not know how or why any escaped.) Most of these came with us, but some were drunk or mad, and laughed at us, or ran away.

It seemed at first that no women but Mrs. Ashbury had survived. We were twenty-two men before we found a second female. Then we came upon four at a street-corner, and five weeping girls from a boarding school. We were thirty men and twenty-odd women, and a few children (very few of the young escaped the sleep), when we reached St. Paul's Cathedral. About a hundred people were waiting there. Others came later—men, women and children. We were five hundred and thirty-seven adults when we met at two o'clock and elected the new Government.

Mrs. Ashbury took the chair and opened the proceedings. She seemed to dominate the assembly, and was elected "Chief Power" without contest. The red-faced man, four other men—a butcher, a tax-collector, a clergyman and a clerk—and a lady, well-known as a leading suffragette, were elected "Powers." Dr. J. B. Mason, the eminent specialist, was appointed Chief Physician. It would be the most important office in the Government, Mrs. Ashbury warned us.

"We shall have to consider how and when to wake the sleepers," she said, "or *how not to wake them*, if they sleep until we have no supplies for them! We will save the world, *if we can!* If not, *we must save ourselves!*"

SO THE new Government began, with the clear understanding that those who slept would, if necessary, be sacrificed. Some of the audience, like myself, shuddered, but no one controverted the understanding. For the moment it seemed to me to be reasonable—a law of self-preservation. I might have adopted it, and have been one of the Powers by now, for more were added afterward, and I had the favor of Mrs. Ashbury; but a little memory came into my mind. That little memory may destroy my body in the end; but I think it will have saved my soul.

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It was just a recollection of a girl who smiled at me, when we talked at the At Home in Rosendale Road, and I asked her why she smiled at everybody.

"I smile for two reasons," she said. "I always think 'some day you may help little me'; and I always think 'some day little me may help you.'"

Now the helpful little lady lay sleeping with her head on my cricket-bag; and the Powers would judge whether she should have her chance to wake; and I would judge the Powers! That was the beginning of my lack of loyalty to the new Government. I knew well enough that a struggle with it almost certainly meant destruction. For it was the strong-minded and the strong-willed who escaped the fly, and the Powers were the strongest of these. Nevertheless, from the first I meant to make the struggle, if it was necessary, to help "little me."

The "Chief Power"—as they call Mrs. Ashbury—told me that I was to be her secretary.

"You are like my son who died," she said, putting her hand on my shoulder for a moment. "Remember that I would not spare my son, if he were disloyal to me now. You think I am hard? These are hard times; harder than the days of primitive savagery. Nothing but strength—hard strength—if necessary, fierce and cruel strength—can save the world; and I am here to save the world!"

Her eyes flashed, and she drew herself up. For a moment my admiration carried me away, and I felt tempted to believe in her and serve her blindly; but the thought of the little girl who loved to help, and whom she would doom so carelessly, came into my mind again.

"To save the world," I said. "Yes, but what do you mean by 'the world'?"

"The world is ourselves," she answered, "we who wake. I can save no more, I think."

I often wondered how far she held this belief and acted conscientiously upon it. I am inclined to think that at first she was honest; but that the love of dominion outgrew all other motives as she tasted power, and that later she was actuated entirely by her determination to rule the whole earth and to suffer the return of no old rulers. Anyhow, her policy, from the first, was to sacrifice the sleepers.

She called a "Cabinet Council" at once, divided the duties of the new State, and entrusted different departments to each of the "Powers." One was to select residences, provide food, and so on. Another was to restore communication by rail, so far as possible, and to collect motor transport. A third was to communicate with different places in the Kingdom and tell them to establish local governments and report as to the numbers surviving, and so on. A fourth was to communicate similarly with foreign countries and to propose a General Council. The fifth was to make arrangements to make sure that the supply of water and light did not fail. The sixth department, under the red-haired man, was the Police, to rule the country under martial law. She kept the fourth and sixth departments immediately under her eye, and issued a proclamation at once that no one was to return to his home, or to trouble about the sleepers. "Let the dead bury the dead!" she said, repeating her favorite maxim. "We have enough to do to save the living!"

I ENTERED on my duties at once and sat at a table with her, writing letters and telegrams at her dictation. About eight in the evening, when there was a lull in the correspondence, I asked permission to go back to Dulwich for an hour or so, wishing to put the sleeping girl, whom I thought of as "little me," into a place of greater security. I was promptly refused.

"Once for all," she told me, "my work is your work, and my work is for the *living*. I like you the best of these, I think; but that will not save you if you disobey me!"

At midnight, when practically all England had accepted the rule of the Chief Power, and she was busy in arranging a general telegraphic council with the new Governments in other countries, she dismissed me. I got into a private motor that was standing in Ludgate Hill, and drove it down to Dulwich, passing through silent streets, with sleepers lying everywhere. I found the girl still resting peacefully. I brought her back with me, and took her to an upper room in the Chief Power's house, where my quarters were. As I was carrying her up-stairs I met the Chief Power. She turned pale with anger.

"Come to my study, when you have disposed of that useless lumber," she said very quietly.

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I found her sitting at a table. She had a revolver in her hand.

"You have disobeyed," she said. "Your life is forfeit." She bit her lips and seemed to struggle with herself. "My God!" she cried passionately, "if you weren't so like my son!"

"Well," I said, "you loved your son; and I love the little girl whom I have put where she can rest softly. It is all that I can do for her."

"You can do *nothing* for her!" she contradicted. "Or for the rest of the sleepers. We can barely save the living world. You do not see what is before us. I do. There is no past, only a future. No future, unless we put aside everything but work to make one. There shall be no future for those who refuse!"

She half raised the revolver—lowered it again.

"No past!" I cried. "There is—your son!"

She gave a sharp cry. I stooped to spring upon her and take the revolver, but she covered me quietly, and I folded my arms and waited my doom.

"No," she said. "There *was* my son. There *is* you; and you are unfaithful. God help me, if you disobey again, for you must die! Go and sleep. I shall want you at six. You have wasted two hours of the rest that should have strengthened you to work for mankind—what is left—when mankind requires your best effort, and mine. Go!"

"Promise me first that you will not harm *her*," I demanded. She did not answer. "If you do not promise," I said steadily, "you must kill me; or I shall kill you. I warn you."

She threw the revolver to me across the table.

"Kill me!" she cried. "You will kill the rest of the world; and some day you will wish that you had killed yourself! Disloyal servant!"

I handed her back the weapon.

"I will be a loyal servant in all else," I offered; "only spare the girl."

She considered, biting her lips and blinking.

"The girl shall fare with the rest," she said, in a dull voice; "no better, and no worse. I will not harm her individually. Neither will Ifavor her. You, if you weren't like my son—*Go!*"

And then I went to my brief rest.

THE next week was one of continual work. For eighteen hours a day I helped the Chief Power to deal with letters and telegrams about the new Governments. (She had come to leave the home Government to the red-faced man, and confined herself almost entirely to international affairs.) In England the rule of the Powers was accepted readily enough, and there was no reason to suppose that the local bodies were not carrying out instructions. The "wakers" seemed to be of the hard type of Mrs. Ashbury and the red-faced man —ready to ignore the claims of the sleepers and to care only for those who were "awake."

The difficulties were with the Universal Government. There were more people left in the United States than elsewhere. They were very concerned to save their friends who slept, and they carried the election of Abrahams for Power of the World, though Mrs. Ashbury ran him close and became Vice-Power.

She and Abrahams had an animated dispute over future policy. She wished to destroy the sleepers off-hand, and he to save them, although the doctors, including our own Chief Physician, agreed that they would not rouse for many years. They would sleep, they pronounced, and require no nourishment, only warmth and protection from the elements. They would not change or grow older, but wake in a year—three years—ten years—and go on with life where they left off.

"They will wake to starvation," Mrs. Ashbury telegraphed. "Supplies will decay. We have not the hands to sow or reap harvests. To preserve these people, who are, to all intent dead, is to perish with them."

"So far as we can foresee, yes," the Power of the World answered. "But the situation is beyond human foresight. We must take our chance. They have a right to theirs."

"Your judgment is warped by consideration for some personal friends whom you are not brave enough to sacrifice," she accused him.

"No," he answered. "It is my enemies whom I am not brave enough to sacrifice. I could trust myself to judge my friends."

"What do you propose?" she wired back.

"The sleepers must be collected, and placed in comfort in buildings," he telegraphed. "That is the first and most important work. The second is to provide for

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them, so far as we can, when they wake. The third task is for the doctors. They must seek for some drug or process to lengthen the sleep if necessary, so that we can let them wake in detachments, as we are able to provide for them. Then they, too, must toil strenuously to provide means of maintaining more, till in time the whole world lives again."

"And then," she replied, "your rule and mine will be over!"

"Why not?" he answered; and when she argued further, he replied curtly, that her rule, as his, rested upon obedience. "As you want to be obeyed, obey!" he commanded. "That is my last word. You will disobey at your peril!"

Finally she obeyed. Left to herself, I think she would have defied the World Power, but her Council would not support her in that. The Chief Physician, especially, was against her views. He would find a drug to prevent the sleepers awaking all at once, he declared, and that was the best solution of the difficulty. The Suffragette lady—who preserved a good deal of womanliness, and was throughout the kindliest of the Council—supported him strongly; and even the truculent red-faced man refused to agree to wholesale slaughter of the sleepers until the necessity was absolutely proved.

"After all," he said, "it would, at most, only save our lives. That isn't much."

So millions of helpless slumberers owed their lives to Abrahams, the Jew—a man who, it was said, had been a card-sharper, a bucket-shop proprietor and a company swindler; and who now ruled the world—and would not take revenge upon the men who had imprisoned him!

FOR the second week we were hard at work collecting the sleepers and stowing them on beds, couches and floors—wherever we could place large numbers together so that they were easy to watch. Some, of course, had perished by accidents; and a good many from the attacks of dogs, who had become like wolves from hunger. It was necessary already to send out shooting parties to destroy them, and dangerous to go out alone at night. Cattle died in great numbers, and, as we were quite unable to remove the bodies, a pestilence set in. This not only killed some of the "wakers," but many of those who slept. We had not time to bury them, but sent ship-loads down the river and dropped them into the sea.

I moved the girl for whom I cared to the "sleeping location" in the War Office at this time. It was under medical care, and always sprayed with antiseptics, so she was less likely to take infection there. Also it was where the Chief Physician had his quarters, and he promised to look after her.

Our troubles increased during the Winter, and the wolves—as the dogs had become—worried us especially. Packs of them even ran about in London by day; and in many parts of the country the people were forced to leave the villages and farms and to collect in large towns. This interfered with husbandry, and when it came to harvest-time we gathered barely enough for the waking population. The same thing happened all over the world; and on the anniversary of the coming of the green flies Mrs. Ashbury sent a strong protest to the World Power.

It was evident, she represented, that we could never provide for the wants of the sleepers or be secure in the great areas that we now occupied, and must continue to occupy, so long as we were burdened with "dead people." The only safe plan, and the only way to organize labor profitably, was that those who were alive (she always spoke of the sleepers as dead) should concentrate in one or two parts of the world and abandon the rest. The sleepers must be left to their fate, or killed. She considered death more merciful

The World Power replied: "I have never turned my back on a helpless man or woman yet, and I never will. We must work harder and do better next year."

I do not think that any one failed to work hard, but the people suffered and grew weak, and the next year's result was even worse. Great tempests worked havoc upon the crops in many places, and the wolf-dogs overran whole districts. Abrahams himself was attacked by them in the streets of New York and badly injured before he was rescued. There were hardly any cattle left now, so the wolves preyed upon human beings; and poison and shooting scarcely thinned their numbers. But for an epizootic disease among them during the Winter, and the death of many through some severe frosts, they would have annihilated mankind in Great Britain.

Mrs. Ashbury proposed to repeat her suggestion of the previous year to the World

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Power, but, instead of doing so on her own responsibility, she decided to strengthen her hand by the support of her Council; and the Council voted against her. The natural obstinacy of the red-faced man seemed aroused by our difficulties, and he declared that he wasn't going to "give in to a pack of dogs." The Chief Physician supported him. The sleepers were under his charge, and he seemed to have acquired a sort of paternal affection for them. He hoped to dance at my wedding with pretty little No. 214,713, London, he told me sometimes. She was the girl I have mentioned. He had had a number put at the head of each sleeper. I always went to see her during the two hours' rest allowed on Sunday afternoons. (This was our only holiday.)

The year 1918 was one of great sickness and distress and scarcity. In the Autumn, just after the insufficiency of the harvests was fully realized, there was a great alarm. Some of the sleepers, according to the Chief Physician and those who occupied similar posts in other countries, showed symptoms of awakening. In the existing state of supplies this could only mean a struggle to the death for existence, and cables passed all day and all night between the members of the World Council. At last a vote was taken between the proposal of the World Power that the sleepers should be inoculated with the drug which our Chief Physician had invented, and which, he claimed, would ensure sleep for one hundred and thirty-two days, and the proposal of Mrs. Ashbury that the sleepers should be chloroformed to death; after which the living population should be massed in England and certain districts abroad, leaving the rest of the world to wolves and pestilence.

I was sitting by No. 214,713, London, holding her hand, when the Chief Physician came and told me the decision. He was always a good friend to me.

"Abrahams has won by a single vote," he announced. "I—I wouldn't have done it, Raynor. I'd have chloroformed myself first! Well, I shouldn't have used chloroform." He tapped his pocket. "Instaneous. Like one? We may come to it."

"Give me two," I said. One was for No. 214,713, London. I wouldn't leave her to the wolves. She looked such a young, smiling creature. None of my hardships hurt me like that smile of hers.

The day before the inoculation of the sleepers was to take place I stole her away and hid her. It would be no harm for one to wake, I thought, and if she did I meant to try to escape to America, thinking that we should be safer out of the dominion of Mrs. Ashbury. I was discovered. The Chief Power spared me once more, but she swore, by her love for her son, that if I disobeyed a third time I should die. She also dismissed me from my post, and from all Government employment.

The sleepers were inoculated the next day, No. 214,713, London, among the rest. The Chief Physician let me in secretly to see that she still lived and only slumbered as before. He employed me among the watchers of those who slept, unknown to the Chief Power. I heard what was going on in the Councils through him.

THERE was a quarrel between Abrahams and Mrs. Ashbury all that year. She was undoubtedly intriguing with the rest of the General Council, and hoped to displace him. She had ceased to be human since she had sent me away, the Chief Physician said, and was completely dominated by the desire to be ruler of the world. He thought that things were safe while Abrahams kept his place, because she regarded the example of obedience as all-important, in view of her own possible supremacy; but he believed that she would finally supersede him. "And then it's all up!" he said.

The sleepers were reinoculated every few months, and the process was quite successful. But nevertheless an outcry, carefully fanned by the Chief Power, began for "making ourselves safe" by destroying them. Just as this was becoming dangerous, however, the 1919 harvest proved to be a particularly good one. The produce was said to be much more than sufficient to keep all who were "awake" until the next season; and more than enough, if it could all be sown, to secure food that year for everybody, including those who slept. Then Abrahams called the whole General Council to a meeting at New York and made his great proposal.

Let the harvest be divided into three portions, he said. The first and the greatest portion should be sown. It would produce sufficient, if the harvest was good, to maintain every one—wakers and sleepers—on an "emergency ration" till the next season.

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The second portion should be used to feed the wakers till they had finished the plowing and sowing and had guarded the fields till the beginning of Spring. Then they should be inoculated and join the original sleepers, to economize supplies until all should wake together to gather in the harvest. The third portion would provide a pittance to keep the harvesters alive until the new stocks were available. Enough wakers should always remain to guard the buildings of sleep from the wolves, and no more. So the whole world might live again, "by the mercy of God; and without this it would end anyhow," Abrahams said.

Some regarded the proposal as the salvation of the world; others as its destruction. At first the latter predominated. We might wake, they objected, to find the harvests had failed. We might wake to find no passage through the wolves at the door. We might never wake at all. The World Power agreed to all this, but he still urged his proposal in a brief address, which was posted up everywhere. "At the worst," he wrote, "it is only dying at one time instead of another; and, with our dear friends asleep, life is little to some of us. Go and sit beside those of yours who slumber and make your decision there."

That was how the decision was made, when the Council issued the referendum to the people. Those who feared to sleep went and heartened themselves with the sight of their friends and relatives who lay in long rows in hospitals and galleries and halls and churches and museums, and sometimes in large private houses—or rather houses that had been private possessions, for there is no property now. Many kissed their unconscious friends; and some cried that sleep was better than the unremitting toil and the lonely struggles and the bitter horrors of the last few years.

So the decision in favor of the referendum was almost unanimous. For the last few months we have been making our preparations. ,In some countries the wakers, excepting the few selected as guardians, have lain down and suffered the injection of the drug, and lie asleep. In England we begin to-morrow; and I am drawn by lot in the first batch. "The sooner to wake," the Chief Physician says; and I shall lie beside 214,713, London; and, so far as he can judge, she will wake soon after me.

"*If* we wake," I said; and he and I looked at each other for a long time. For there are rumors of plots and counterplots in these days. The Chief Power has not been seen for weeks. Some say that she has gone to America to kill the Power of the World, or to struggle with him for the supremacy. Certainly many familiar faces are missing; and if she has taken a shipload of followers she may easily overcome him, and the small band who watch with him. If she should, I think that only a very few of us will wake in her time, if ever.

For she will certainly have no return of old authorities to interfere with her own rule. The Chief Physician pooh-poohs the rumors —he has always been outwardly loyal to the Chief Power—but he has guarded, with men armed to the teeth, the Palace where our royalty and the members of the old Government of 1916 sleep.

"Yes," he said at last, "I have thought of that. If it were only my word to her, I would break it, and you, and others whom I trust, should not sleep, but wake and keep watch with me. But I have passed my word to the Power of the World that none shall escape the lot. He is the best and the wisest of us, and—and I think there is a greater Power over all, though sometimes I have doubted. We are in His hands, awake or asleep. The Powers of the earth will not prevail over God!"

In that thought I take comfort, and in that hope I shall lie down to my rest, holding the hand of the woman who is numbered "214,713, London," and placing this writing between us, so that, if she wakes first, she may know what I have set down. God guard us in our sleep!

(*"The Awakening," a sequel to this story, will appear in the next number.*)

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Old Jim

By

Rufus Fairchild Zogbaum

"LOOK out, Bill!"

Sergeant Taylor's voice rang out sharply. An ominous buzzing whir sounded in the hot, still air; almost simultaneously a brown streak shot—like the snapping of a rubber band—out of the short grass that patched the prairie in dry bunches on all sides, and Donaldson's big bay reared and plunged, shying to one side with a violence that would have thrown any less practised rider than the seasoned trooper who bestrode him.

Alarmed and confused by the men and horses about it, yet still full of fight, the snake lay there coiled for another strike, its tail raised and rattling viciously, as the young trumpeter warily and slowly approached it, and then, snatching off his wide-brimmed felt hat, threw it full at the enraged reptile. Like a flash the snake struck, uncoiling, and with one quick, active spring the boy was upon it, trampling its life out with stamp on stamp of the heavy-heeled cavalry boots.

At this moment Major Haliburton, noticing the confusion in the long extended line of troopers crossing the plain, cantered up, a pair of Indian scouts, or guides, shuffling along on their scraggy though tough and nimble ponies close at his heels.

"What's the trouble here?" he demanded, reining in his charger.

Donaldson raised his eyes as the Major spoke, and I have never seen a more painful look of anxious distress than that depicted on the honest fellow's face as he pointed to where two small red stains in the white hair of the bay's fetlock, just above the left forehoof, showed where the snake's fangs had entered the flesh. Although but a few moments had elapsed since the wound was made, the virulent poison was already eating its way through the veins of the rattler's victim. The horse trembled as in terror, shaking as in mortal agony, and staggered and leaned against his neighboring comrade, as if seeking support to keep himself from sinking to the earth.

Haliburton comprehended at once. "Poor Old Jim! of all the horses in the regiment!" he exclaimed, dismounting.

"Huh—yes—heap bad; snake kill horse," grunted one of the Indians, Big Cloud by name, as, squatting down alongside Donaldson and extending two long, black-nailed fingers, he gently pressed the fetlock above the hurt, closely examining the little bloody punctures around which the flesh was already perceptibly swelling.

"Heap bad," he repeated shaking his head. "Wait here; come back soon."

Turning to his fellow scout, Big Cloud exchanged a few guttural words with him, and together they moved out on the prairie, bending low, pushing aside the bunches of grass with the handles of their quirts, circling and nosing about like dogs on a scent. But whatever they were seeking—herb,

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root, or some kind of shrub or plant—was evidently not to be found. Haliburton, from whose saddle a shot-gun—which he was wont to take with him on occasions like our ride this morning—swung in a carbine-boot, wore buckled around his waist a belt in the loops of which a number of paper-shelled shot-cartridges were sticking. By him, Big Cloud stopped, and unceremoniously plucked a cartridge from the Major's belt, broke it open, and spilled the powder into the palm of his hand.

"Hullo, sogers, got tobacco?" he asked of the men about him; then, not awaiting an answer, as his sharp, bright eyes fell upon one tall, lank individual whose bulging cheek betrayed the quid it covered, Big Cloud holding out one hand, with the little pile of gunpowder in it, tapped the man's face with the other, and said with a grin:

"Heap good chaw. Spit in hand!"

Poor Donaldson was the only one whose sense of humor was not overcome by the ludicrous expression of astonished embarrassment that spread over the soldier's countenance. Even Haliburton could not refrain from smiling, and Jerry gave vent to a sudden loud haw! haw! then choked and spluttered and, clapping his hand over his mouth, buried his face in his horse's mane. After a moment's hesitation, during which he glanced in comical dismay from one grinning face to another, the trooper complied with the demand of the Indian, who, not satisfied with a copious supply of tobacco-juice, insisted on having the quid as well. Mixing gunpowder and tobacco together in his hand and crouching down again, Big Cloud clapped the mess over the wound and bound it tightly to the horse's leg with my handkerchief which, without as much as "by your leave," he had taken from the breast-pocket of my coat.

"Mebbe can make well," he said, as he bounded lightly from the ground to his pony's back and sat astride there, stoically wiping the palms of his hands on the brass-beaded blue cloth leggings he wore.

"Well, perhaps there's a fighting chance; I hope so, I'm sure," said Haliburton, taking his horse's lines from the hands of his orderly and swinging himself into the saddle. "Donaldson, see if you can lead your horse back to camp. And—er—Sergeant Taylor, let one of the men gallop in ahead of Donaldson, and bring the veterinary out to meet him. Forward!"

IT WAS late in the afternoon when the command returned to camp. After supper, Jerry, having informed me, with a grin, that the Sergeant had "gone down the creek a ways to do up his lingery," I lighted my pipe and set off in search of him.

Following well-beaten trails under the trees, I soon came upon the Sergeant, squatted on the very brink of the stream. Near him, "Dutchy" Rinehart, soap-suds up to the elbows, scrubbed away at a heavy flannel shirt, while hanging from the branches of a bush several articles of underclothing were spread out to dry.

"Monday's wash-day, you know, sir," said Taylor, smiling and partly rising at my approach, giving the curious back-handed lift of his fingers toward his hat he was wont to greet me with, a sort of compromise between the half-military salute he seemed to think due the Major's friend, and the ordinary salutation to a mere civilian. Then, giving a last rinsing swish through the water to the big bandanna handkerchief he was washing, he wrung it out, placed it on the bush and, shaking the wet from his hands, seated himself on a stone near where I had placed myself on the fallen trunk of a tree.

"Sergeant," I said, abruptly giving utterance to my thoughts, "Donaldson seems to be very fond of his horse."

"Yes, sir, Billy sure does set great store by the animal, and, for the matter of that, so does all C Troop. Old Jim's a sorter—what's that you call it—mascot? Yes, sir, that's it. You heard me and the Major arguin' to-day about where Lieutenant Morton was killed? Well, I knowed what I was talkin' about when I said that gully was four, five mile down the river, because I was one of the party sent out in search. You couldn't fool me on them bluffs and that plain there." Taylor made a comprehensive sweep of his arm toward the opposite shore. "*There's* where we jumped the village; I rec'lect chargin' through the teepees, and comin' up against them banks. It wa'n't until we'd cleaned things out pretty well that the Lieutenant was missed. I heard Bill Compton, the scout, tellin' the Old Man that he see the Lieutenant lookin' through his glasses down the river, and then all of a suddent he just yells: 'Come on, boys!' and away him and a bunch of C Troop went gallopin' into the timber.

"That was the last any of us see of 'em

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alive. We come on to the bodies next day, layin' stiff and dead and naked on the snow, heads smashed in, ears and noses cut off, eyes gouged out and—*Aarrgh!* it makes me almost sick to think of it! They was so hashed up we couldn't hardly make out which was which, and as we was standin' around there, kinder projectin' as to how it all happened, what should come kickin' and neighin' out of the brush but that an'mal, Jim! He was the only livin' thing left of the whole outfit, and *he* couldn't tell us nothin'. But ever since then we've kinder made a pet of the old horse in C Troop."

The Sergeant sat in silence for several moments, pulling at his pipe, his hands clasped around the knee of one long leg crossed over the other, as he gazed out to where, a hundred yards or so away in the shallow stream, a number of the men, shouting and laughing, were bathing, their naked athletic forms gleaming white in the yellow water and contrasting with the red hue of their sunburned faces and hands.

"Yes, sir," Taylor resumed, as the fire in his pipe rekindled, "as I was sayin', Billy thinks a heap more of that horse than he does of most things, except me—and mebbe the Major and that young scamp, Jerry. Some men is queer that way—with horses, I mean. Now, ev'ry good cav'lryman treats his mount right; he's plumb got to, or he ain't no account as a horse-soldier. But horses 're like men—some 're good, most is kind of indiff'rent, and some's so ornery and mean you can't do nothin' with 'em, and that's the sort of an'mal Old Jim was.

"You see, sir, he was a new horse then—just Jim; we've called him Old Jim since. He didn't take well to the ranks, kickin' and bitin' and raisin'——gen'rally; but somehow Billy took a shine to him, and the Major turned Jim over to him as his reg'lar mount, and he's rode him ever since. Billy ain't no jockey nor circus-rider; he's just a plain ev'ry-day private soldier, but he's got a way with horses an dogs and such, and he's one of the best men ever straddled a horse. I don't know what he done with Jim, but ev'ry chanst that Winter when we was back at the Post again, Billy'd get permission to take him out, and put him through a course of sprouts—drill him and drill him to make a cav'lry horse out of him, same's you'd make a soldier out of a rookie; so that when Spring come, and things begun to liven up a bit, man and horse was the best of friends.

"If Jim'd hear Billy's footstep in the stable, he'd whinner and turn his head and cock his eye, pull back on his halter and make room in his stall, lookin' pleased and inn'cent as a young girl when her sweetheart comes a-courtin'! When they was out on herd, all Billy'd have to do was to stick his fingers in his mouth and whistle, and Jim'd come cavortin' and tearin' and chargin' right up to him, till you'd think he'd sure run him down, but Billy'd stand there stock-still, and Jim would stop suddent, bracin' all four feet, and stick out his nose and slobber at Billy's blouse."

TAYLOR took his pipe from his mouth and chuckled,—a silent, noiseless laugh—shaking his head in evident amusement at some reminiscence called up in his memory.

"Mr. Kent, did I ever tell you of the stampede on the Stillwater? No? Well, you mus'n't say anything to the Major about it—it's kind of a joke on him. It's the only mistake I ever knowed him to make, but we was both young then, me and him. Yes, sir.

"Lemme see—it must've been the second Summer after our campaign along the river here. We'd moved away south into the Territory and had just finished buildin' the stockade at Fort Hainsworth—you know, sir, the post that was abandoned when we come up here again last year. Yes, sir. Well, there wa'n't no railroad in that country, of course, in them days, and all our supplies had to be hauled by waggin, and it was up to the cav'lry, most times, to furnish the train guards.

"There was one time when there was a detail of some twenty, twenty-five of us of C Troop guardin' a small bull-train of mebbe six, eight waggins with grub and am'nition for the Post. The Major—of course you know he was only a leftenant then and I was corp'ral—was the only off'cer with the escort, but we had old Sergeant Hitchcock along of us too, and he was as good as most off'cers, and a —— sight better than some. We'd come along perfectly peaceful for some days, just a-crawlin', for them bull-teams moves terrible slow. There hadn't been a sign of a Injun nowheres, and we was within five, six days' march of the Post, when we parked the waggins one evenin', and went into camp in a little valley where the water was sweet and good grass a plenty.

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"The horses was unsaddled and turned out to graze, and how it come about that only one man was guardin' 'em, and him new and onused to service in the wild country, I dunno. Anyway, the herd'd wandered further from camp than it'd ought to, and was a good piece up the creek when, all of a suddent, there come the worst hullaballoo I ever heard, and a bunch of Injuns come a-dashin' on their ponies out of a coulee and over a little raise in the ground, where the creek turned, yellin' and shootin' and wavin' buff'lo robes and blankets, makin' straight for the herd. And before you could say Jack Robinson, there was every horse in the outfit a-gallopin' away across the prairie, and us standin' there by the waggins, lookin' after 'em with our mouths open!

"Lord! Mr. Kent, but the Major was sore! But it wa'n't a circumstance to the way Billy felt! He was just *tearin'* mad, for Jim was gone off with the other horses, of course. The herd guard had lost his mount too; the —— fool had dismounted and was settin' down, a-holdin' his lines loose in his hand, and when the redskins come a-hollerin' out of the coulee, why, his horse just jerked away from him—and there he was! Lucky for him he didn't have his fat head stove in by the brutes, though Billy come nigh doin' that for him himself after he come scootin' into camp, scared almost silly! As soon as the Major and old Hitchcock got through jawin' him and he come over to where the rest of us was, out of sight of the Major, Billy walks up to him and he says:

"'Where's my horse? Where's Jim? You call yourself a soldier? Put up your fists, you wall-eyed, broken-winded, spavined son of a skate!' he says, and with that he fetched him one, and flung him about and rough-housed the poor devil up and down between the waggins, until I was obliged to jump in and punch Billy's head a bit myself, so's to make him keep the peace.

"There ain't much can make a cav'lryman feel more low down and mean than to be sot afoot, and we was a sure-enough discouraged-lookin' party when we pulled out the next mornin'. There wa'n't a mounted man in the outfit—even the waggin-master's mule'd been run off—so we hadn't no flankers nor scouts out. Now, even only six, eight waggins, each one with its ten, twelve yoke of oxen, made a pretty long line for only the few there was of us to guard, and all we could do was to plod away like a passel of doughboys—a string of us along each side of the train—and trust to luck.

"That day and the next we hadn't no more trouble but the blamed walkin'. None of us was used to footin' it much, and our ridin'-boots wa'n't made for that sort of work. Some of the men's feet got pretty sore, but there wa'n't nothin' to do but to just tramp along, with a little cussin' now and then to ease your mind. I felt real sorry for the Major. Not that foot-marchin' seemed to feaze him any; he'd keep right along ahead of the train, switchin' a little stick in his hand, and them long, limber legs steppin' out, never sayin' a word to nobody, but we all could see how the loss of them horses was worryin' him. But that wa'n't all was keepin' his mind workin'. We was still a good stretch from the Post at the rate we was movin', and a rough country to cross. There was mebbe only about a dozen bucks in the bunch that'd jumped the herd, but we all knowed that eight waggins full of plunder, not to speak of all them oxen, was too temptin' to Injun nature not to bring 'em whoopin' back, with every other murderin' thief of a redskin they could reach, for a try for some more pickin's.

"SO A COUPLE of evenin's after, when me and Dutchy here was inside the corral hustlin' some grub, I wa'n't much surprised to hear, all of a suddent, yellin' and firin' over where the bull-teams was turned out to grass. Exceptin' me and Dutchy and the Major, who was layin' down to one side, and mebbe one or two footsore men, all the rest of the outfit, soldiers and bullwhackers, was out guardin' the herd, and if I wa'n't astonished at gettin' another visit from the devils so soon, I was sure took aback when I run out from behind the waggins and see what them herders was up against.

"Where we'd gone into camp was risin' ground, clear of trees and such, but below the plateau the banks of the creek was thick with timber and brush. Now, we'd come across a pretty dry stretch of country the last two days, no water in it to speak of, and when them bull-teams see the stream a-shinin' through the brush there wa'n't no holdin' 'em. The men was all afoot, you

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know, and all they could do was to try and keep the herd bunched as close as possible, but even then the oxen got kinder strung out, most of 'em standin' in the water which wa'n't more'n knee-deep all the way across.

"Well, sir, there they was, suckin' in the water and the herders wadin' about tryin' to keep 'em from strayin', when the redskins opened fire. Mr. Kent, them woods was fair alive with Injuns! They'd crep' up, dismounted, or mebbe they was waitin' there for us, and when they got good and ready they let drive. I could see the herders was doin' their best to stand 'em off; old Hitchcock was prancin' around in the water, shoutin' orders, and they makin' a game fight of it, pumpin' lead back at the redskins, and workin' like —— to keep the oxen bunched and headed back to camp. But it wa'n't no use, for next thing you know, there come a swarm of mounted warriors, mebbe fifty of 'em, cavortin' from behind the hills and out of the coulees back from the creek, chargin' right into the herd, drivin' the oxen across and sendin' our men scuttlin' right and left for cover and makin' for the waggins as fast as their legs could carry 'em.

"I wish you could 'a' seen the Major then, Mr. Kent! At the first shot he was on his feet and outside the corral. For just one second he stood stock-still, takin' in the situation. Then singin' out to me:

"'Corp'ral,' he says, 'you and the rest of the men stay by the waggins! Open fire at once! Trumpeter, sound the rally!' he hollers.

"And with that down the slope he started, goin' in long jumps like a deer, with nothin' but that little switch he'd been carryin', in one hand, and wavin' his big soft hat in the other, little Thompson, the trumpeter, blowin' the rally jerky-like, but quick and sharp and loud, hoppin' along after him. Well, sir, it done my heart good to see how them men of C Troop, down in the bottom there, pulled themselves together when they heard the trumpet a-blarin' and see the Major comin' to 'em. In a moment they was around him—some of 'em that was half-way up the slope towards the waggins turnin' back, and there they was, deployed as skirmishers, firin' steady, fallin' back orderly and quiet to the waggins.

"Two, three men was hit comin' up the slope—nothin' to speak of, but the Major was hurted bad. He'd got two bullets into him, one of 'em right about here"—the Sergeant pressed a forefinger on his thigh —"goin' kind of upward, and one of 'em went through the other leg 'bout half-way down from the knee, so he wa'n't much on walkin' when we got him inside the corral and laid him on the ground. We'd only time to twist a rag 'round his leg to check the bleedin', and he was in awful pain. You could see that by the way the sweat stood out on his forehead, but he never let on how terrible that bullet in his thigh was hurtin' him, and sot there with his back agin' a mess-chest, givin' orders through his teeth, never oncet lettin' go his holt on himself.

"DOWN from the plateau we was on, the slope run gentle and smooth for about half a mile, but beyond that the prairie was all broke up and rollin'. Out there the Injuns was thick as gophers, ridin' up and down out of the hollers and gatherin' in bunches on the risin' ground, and we see the scrimmage we'd just had wa'n't a circumstance to what was comin' to us before long.

"Meanwhile we was gettin' busy the best we knowed how. Some of the waggins was loaded with clothin' and blankets, and we set to dumpin' the boxes out as fast as we could, stoppin' up the spaces and makin' sorter breastworks between the waggins and under the waggin bodies. There was a lot of new Springfields and a big load of amm'nition, and we got as much out as we could get at, so's every man had two, three spare rifles, besides the carbines, and open boxes of ca'tridges ready to hand. We hadn't gotten more'n a straggly sort of defense made and was still hustlin' for all we was worth when: 'Here they come, sir!' old Hitchcock sings out to the Major.

"Once you're in a fight it's all right, of course, but I don't b'lieve any man goes into one without bein' a little shaky inside *at* first. Leastways I never do without a kind o' gone feeling that makes me want to swaller hard with nothin' in my mouth, and that's the way I felt when I sprawled under one of the waggins and see what a slew of them murderin' devils was comin' at us. The ridge was fair covered with Injuns, some scootin' around on their ponies, others afoot—squaws mebbe and young ones—but what interested me most was a big band of

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mounted warriors that come sweepin' out of a deep draw between the hills on to the level grounds at the bottom of the slope at the same time the redskins in the timber and on the other bank of the river opened fire on us.

"But the shootin' didn't feaze us none. Most of the bullets fell short, and them that ripped into the waggins or went singin' over us only woke us up and steadied our nerves. Anyway, that's what they done for me, and as to Billy, who was layin' 'longside of me, all he done was to cuss low oncet, and him not bein' much of a man for talk, I guessed he was sayin' to himself how he was goin' to take it out of the hides of some of that bunch for the runnin' off of Jim. But there wa'n't much time for guessin' or thinkin', for oncet the redskins cleared the ravine, they give their warwhoops and come chargin' up the slope, makin' straight for us as fast as their ponies could go.

"'Steady, men! Don't fire till I give the word!' I heard the Major's voice, ca'm and strong like at drill. 'Aim low—keep your sights on 'em—St-e-a-dy!' he says.

"I ain't got no use for Injuns, Mr. Kent, but them devils sure made a grand show. They was mebbe five, six hundred of 'em in a thick crowd, 'bout fifty, sixty front and ten deep, naked and painted all sorts of colors, with feathers and war-bonnets wavin' and the sun sparklin' on their guns and orn'ments. It was hard not to pull trigger, but we knowed the Major knowed what he was about, and there wa'n't a sound from any of us, as the Injuns come a-rushin' nearer and nearer, till we could see their faces and they was whoopin' triumphant already, so cocksure was they.

"'Fire!' shouts the Major, loud and clear.

"Well, sir, the next few minutes was just a mix-up of shootin' and smoke and noise. We give 'em two, three volleys and fetched a lot of 'em, redskins and ponies, but the rest kep' a-comin' until they got to mebbe about ten yards from us, we blazin' away, every man for himself, as fast as we could —and then the ponies refused. The Injuns was brave enough, —— 'em, and urged their horses right into our fire, tryin' with all their might to get a whack at us, spreadin' out and surroundin' the corral and shootin' at us from the backs of their horses. But as one after another went down, first there seemed to be a sorter fringin' away along the edges of the crowd, and then all of a suddent the whole bunch broke, all the spunk licked out of 'em, and away they scuttled down the slope like so many jack-rabbits.

"THE Injuns in front of me and Billy was the last ones to skip, and there was one big fellow in particular who seemed to be tryin' to hold 'em, flyin' 'round like a shadder in the smoke, wavin' his gun over his head. But when he see it wa'n't no use he pulled up just long enough to shake his fist at us, and, wheelin' his horse, let out after the others. There was a gentle little breeze blowin' and the smoke driftin' away some. I was just drawin' a bead on him—and I stood a pretty good chanct of hittin' him, too—when I felt a grab on my shoulder, and Billy, givin' me a shove that sent me rollin', yanked away the bale of blankets I was aimin' over, and begun to crawl out on all fours between the wheels!

"Billy's shove was noways gentle, and when I pulled myself together and see him jump to his feet and go hikin' out after the redskins I was sure some astonished. But I thought he'd gone plumb crazy when—never haltin' for a second—he stuck his fingers in his mouth and let out whistle after whistle, loud and piercin' so you could hear it over all the yellin' and firin' still goin' on. The Injun's horse was goin' at a pretty good pace, but all of a suddent he makes three, four of them short, stiff-legged jumps a horse takes when he's tryin' to stop himself runnin', and turned so swift as to send his rider almost flyin' off over his shoulder.

"But that redskin had a good grip, and though he lost holt of his gun and it dropped, he had his seat again in a second, and was lashin' with his quirt and tuggin' and pullin' at the bridle while the horse kep' on turnin', r'arin' up and buckin', till of a suddent he seemed to catch sight of Billy comin' steady down the slope, still whistlin'. *Then* there wa'n't no holdin' him, and away he bolted, makin' straight for Billy, and it wa'n't until then that I see the American bay the Injun was ridin', with all them feathers and contraptions in his mane and tail, was no other than that plain, ornery troop-horse, Jim!

"Billy stood stock-still as Jim come at him full speed, the Injun still on his back, for the horse was goin' too fast for him

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to risk droppin' off. But if the redskin couldn't hold Jim from boltin', he could keep him from stoppin' altogether, so when they come up to where Billy was, what with bit and quirt he kep' the horse r'arin' and plungin' and circlin' round Billy until, jumpin' in, he got a grab on to the bridle. I see Billy's hand go to his holster, but it flapped light and empty to his touch, for the revolver was layin' where he'd left it in the corral.

"The Injun see it, too, and he give a sudden leap off the horse's back and had Billy cut with his knife almost before he touched the ground. If the Injun was quick, so was Billy, but, havin' hold of the bridle, he wa'n't quite fast enough when he let go and ducked. But the Injun's hand went over and his knife ripped a long gash in the muscle of the shoulder-blade and, before he could recover, Billy side-stepped and fetched him one on the jaw with his fist, and then they clinched. Down they went, the knife flyin' away to one side, and they rolled over and over in the grass, Billy reachin' for the redskin's eyes and Jim trottin' 'round and 'round them, head up, snortin' and neighin'.

"Me and two, three others run out to Billy's help, but he didn't need none, for before we got there he was standin' up, wipin' his thumbs on his trousers, lookin' down at the Injun. The redskins in the timber commenced to wake up now, and the bullets was slappin' the dust up all 'round us; besides, we heard old Hitchcock cussin' and yellin' at us to come in. So, leavin' the Injun stretched out on his belly with his legs twitchin' and his feet drummin' on the ground, and his hands grabbin' at the holes in his face where his eyes used to be, we scooted for cover again. Billy jumped on Jim's back, and he rode him through where some of the men had shoved aside the bales between two of the waggins, and pulled up where the Major was settin', and dismounted. Then standin' at Jim's head, heels together, he drawed himself up, and 'salutin'—

"'Sir, I've found my horse,' he says."

OVER from the tents of the camp trumpet-notes came floating on the evening air—the first call for tattoo, even though the slow warning twilight of early Summer in the Northwest still lingered in the skies. Taylor tapped the ashes from his pipe on his boot-heel, and we rose to our feet and took the way back to camp, Reinhart gathering up his "wash" from the bushes and following close behind us on the narrow trail.

"How did things finally come out?" I asked.

"Why, when they got word at the Post of the pickle we was in, the Old Man himself turned out with blame near the whole garrison and a howitzer, and druv' the redskins off in short order. I'll tell you about that some other time, Mr. Kent," the Sergeant replied. "You see, Billy and Jim slipped through the Injun lines that night. It was mighty risky business, but they got through all right, though oncet they had to make a race for it. What was three, four days goin' for bull-teams wa'n't nothin' much extra for such a horse as Jim was in them days, so they reached the Post in good time, or mebbe none of us in that outfit would 'a' been here now. That's a good many years ago—Old Jim ain't no colt no more—and we've kinder made a pet of him in C Troop ever since. I hope he's goin' to get over that snake-bite; I'd hate to have him die thataway after all he done for us. Well, I got to turn off here—good night, sir."

SOME months after I returned East, I received a letter from my good friend, the Sergeant—a letter written in a fine copperplate hand; every word accurately spelled, and with scarcely a trace of his sometimes idiomatic and ungrammatical manner of speech. After reference to various matters of interest to me, but not connected with my tale, the letter ended as follows:

You have heard from the Major that Old Jim recovered from that snake-bite, but he has never been up to cavalry work since. So he was inspected and condemned, but the enlisted men of C Troop chipped in and bought him in, and we are going to take care of him for the rest of his life. I think the Government could afford to pension such a horse as Old Jim, same as a soldier, instead of selling him for next to nothing to strangers. Donaldson's new horse is Kentucky bred and a beauty. Hoping you are well, I have the honor to be, Sir,

Very Respectfully, Your obedient servant,
DANIEL TAYLOR,
2d Sergeant, C Troop, U. S. Cavalry.

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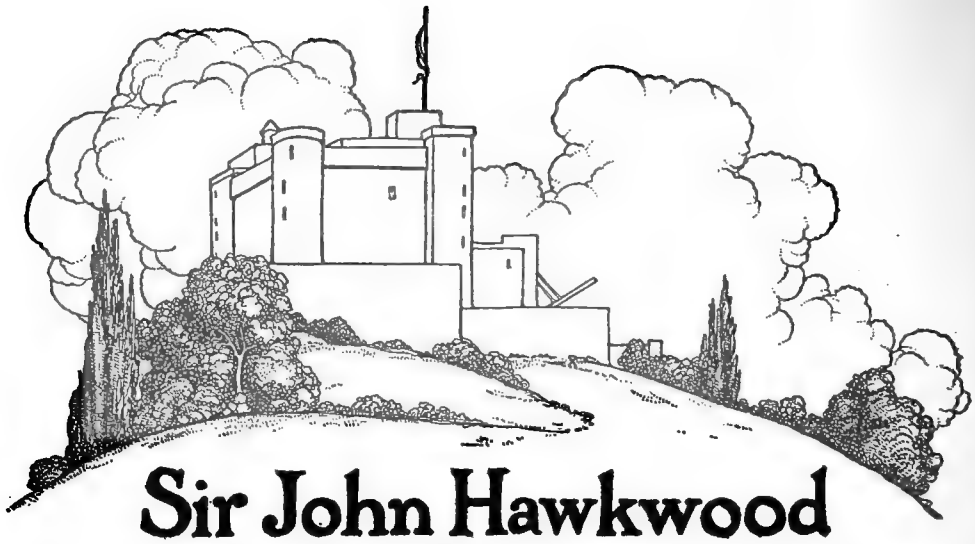

Sir John Hawkwood

A tale of the White Company in Italy

by **Marion Polk Angellotti**

SYNOPSIS: Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English mercenary, at the time of this story in the service of Della Scala, Prince of Verona, boldly refuses to kidnap the Prince's ward and cousin, the Princess Giulia, and allow the Prince to make a pretended rescue for the purpose of furthering his love-suit. Hawkwood and his lieutenant, O'Meara, (in love with the Princess's friend, Francesca di Montalto) fear a treacherous revenge; Hawkwood overhears a plot of the Prince's favorite, Della Torre, and his wife Violante, to undo him by a false charge of treachery. He attempts to warn Giulia, but she repulses him with scorn for his low birth and riotous life. He forcibly retains her scarf to wear as his colors in battle.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE TAVERN

IT WAS night when I reached the tavern, yet I was the first arrival there. The candles were lighted, and under their softening rays the tiled floor strewn with old bearskins appeared less shabby, while the worn, drooping red tapestries on the walls took on a warmth and richness of color that pleased and held the eye. At the left of the room was a great fireplace, full of blazing logs. Blue smoke and the odor of roasting meat drifted in from the near-by kitchen, where supper was being got ready.

After a time the host's pretty daughter came in, brought me half-a-dozen flasks of wine at my order, and lingered, willing to drink or chat with me had I encouraged her. But to-night I remained darkly silent.

"Ah, well," she said after a pause, with a toss of her comely head, "you are not very civil to-night, Sir John Hawkwood. You are a man of moods, eh? I have seen many men and many soldiers, Sir John, but none like you!"

"As well for the others!" I muttered, without looking at her. She laughed and swung herself on the table-edge, showing a dainty foot and ankle.

"You puzzle me," she said, propping her chin in her hands. "Sometimes you are gay, sometimes you are grim. And yet I think you are never truly merry. When you laugh loudest there is bitterness in your face, and when you drink most deeply you have the air of one sick at heart. As for me, you think no more of me when you smile at me and talk of my eyes and lips than when you pass me without a glance. Is not that so?"

The words were truer ones than I had looked for from her mouth. She laughed again, and bent toward me, her neck shining white above the dull red of her bodice.

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"You are in a black mood now," she said; "one of the moods that come to you so often, that have cut those deep lines of reckless gloom across your face. When you are of this way of thinking your free-lances fear you as they do not fear the devil. I would give something to know what comes over you from time to time, Sir John."

"You who know so much should guess that too," I answered, mocking her, but without merriment.

"I think I can," she answered shrewdly. "I think that there are days when you hate yourself and scorn your fashion of life, and in such moods you turn to wine or fighting for relief. That is why you have so grim and black and reckless a face. So! you winced then! Did I hit the mark?"

"Go, leave me!" I cried in a rage. "Whatever my mood may be, it is not one for talk!"

"Why, I have no wish to talk with any one so rough!" she cried pettishly, and whisked out of the door with a flirt of her gay petticoat.

A little thing had put me out of temper. In the street near the inn I had passed two friars, dusty and worn from walking, and they had nudged each other and whispered at the sight of me. "Sir John Hawkwood, the great captain," they muttered in awed tones, and with the deep admiration which, in wild times, most men of peaceful ways feel for men of the sword. As they drew back to give me way, they ventured to salute me. "God give you peace, Sir John Hawkwood," they said together.

I raised my head and stared at them from under threatening brows. "God take away your alms!" I rejoined curtly.

The friars stared at each other, amazed at such a response to their timid civility. Then the bolder of the two spoke again. "Have we displeased you, Sir John? Indeed, we meant no offense," he said, regarding me from the shelter of his cowl.

"No offense, when you pray God to give me peace?" I cried. "Do you not know that I live by war, and that if peace ever comes to me all my means of sustenance will be gone? To pray peace for me is to pray that I shall die of starvation. If you wish me well, pray that all Italy shall writhe in the throes of conflict; that blood shall flow like water!" The two friars, comprehending at last, began to laugh, and I laughed too, but without much mirth.

AS I SAT drinking in the tavern their words recurred to me and brought a bitter smile to my lips. "Peace! What would I do to gain my bread in time of peace, I wonder?" I muttered gloomily. "I am good for nothing save the taking of towns and the winning of battles."

Filling a cup slowly, I drained it, then refilled it. The candle-light struck across my eyes, and I moved my chair noisily. "If in one of my wild sallies I were to go down and never rise again to my feet, as may well happen any day of a life like mine, who would regret me? Who?"

No friend in all the world save the Irishman, an adventurer like myself! To be sure, my men loved me after a rough fashion, yet they loved my warlike skill, my power to lead them to victory, rather than myself.

Having thus conclusively proved my lonely position, I poured more wine and drank it, scowling at the hearth.

A face took shape between me and the great chimney, a very beautiful, proud face, with dusky hair and sweet, haughty, dark eyes veiled by long lashes, and white skin contrasting with warm scarlet lips. It was so real that I started, then laughed aloud in bitterness. How she had scorned me, this cold young girl with the royal look! Well, was she not right?

My thoughts turned to the days when, as a lad, I had been apprenticed to a tanner, that I might in time follow my father's trade. Perhaps it would have been better for me had I done so—yet how I had hated those months of labor!

Those days in France had been happy ones for me. All my radiant boyish visions had seemed to come true; I had lived among gallant knights and brave soldiers, and noble gentlemen whose names stood for chivalry over all the world. My skill and my desperate courage won me notice as time went on; no less a man than the great Sir John Chandos, the pride of knighthood, had praised and encouraged me, and drawn the Prince's notice to my doings. I had won my golden spurs—ah, the rapture of that day, when I had the right to mingle with other knights and surpass them in great deeds if I could! At Poitiers I had done good work, had helped not a little in the winning of the victory, and had led those who broke through the French King's guard and took him prisoner.

The Black Prince had loved me and had

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treated me as a comrade. I clinched my hands at the remembrance, for this man had been my hero, one for whose smile I would have faced any danger and dared any impossible enterprise. What would I not have done for Black Edward's sake?

The peace of Bretigny ended all warfare on the part of England, and I found myself without means of livelihood. I gathered a band of mercenaries, wandered down to Italy, and began to sell my sword to one ruler and another. I had plied this trade for long years now, and slowly, slowly, I had fallen to what I was. It was too late for me to change!

"*Sir John, no one of my lords has a knightlier heart than you*——"

The King's son had spoken these words to me long ago. I cursed at the remembrance, thinking of all that had come to pass since. Pulling myself to my feet, I made way to the wall and stared gloomily into a cracked Venetian mirror that hung there. My hair was grizzled at the forehead, there were deep lines about my lips, and an old-sword-cut seamed my right cheek from temple to chin. My eyes were stern and piercing, my mouth had the look of a steel trap, and I had an arrogant, reckless air very like that of my wild troopers.

"Prince Edward, would you know Sir John Hawkwood if you could see him now?" I muttered.

After a time I went back to my seat, moving slowly. "Well, well, a few more cups will put me beyond remorse and regret," I thought savagely, as I poured more wine and brought it to my lips.

Again Giulia's face rose before me, pure and pale, regarding me with dark, disdainful eyes. Her lips moved, and it seemed to me that she was murmuring the same words that the Black Prince had spoken to me so long ago.

In sudden passion I flung my cup violently down. I laid my arms on the table, bowed my head upon them, and remained quite motionless for a long time.

THE silence was presently broken by the sound of hoofs outside, mingling with the catch of an Irish song in O'Meara's gay, rollicking voice. Apparently he entered by way of the kitchen, for his blarneying tones could presently be heard there addressing the host's daughter. Laughter and the noise of a struggle floated to my ears, then the unmistakable sound of a kiss. A moment later O'Meara flung the door open and came in, turning his head across his shoulder to send back a final shot.

"Sure and your lips are made of sugar, no less," he laughed. "I'm thinking 'tis the—Now the saints preserve us!" He broke off abruptly, slamming the door behind him. I had not raised my head at his entrance, and at sight of my posture he at once jumped to a conclusion far from flattering to my general habits. "What, Sir John, again, and you scarce sober from last night? By hivin, it's unfit you are to be left alone for a moment! How far gone are ye, then?" he scolded, advancing and shaking my arm energetically. "Think black shame of yourself, Sir John Hawkwood, you that are the greatest soldier in Europe, lying here like any log! Are ye gone deaf, or is it dumb you are?"

"Neither," I answered composedly, straightening and facing him.

At sight of my face he looked properly ashamed of his mistake. "Faith, and I see you're as sober as mesilf," he apologized penitently. "Bad 'cess to me! I've the mind of a goose. There, don't ye be holding it against me, Sir John, darlint," he coaxed, blarneying me shamelessly. "After all, 'tis better for a man to speak out his hard thoughts than to keep them locked in his heart—is not that the truth? And you know well that though I may chatter like any jackdaw, I niver yet failed you in time of need, did I, now?"

"Oh, sit down, Michael, and pour yourself some wine," I said impatiently. "I have something to tell you. Perhaps, when you have heard it, you will see the wisdom of finding yourself another captain."

"Wirra, wirra! and what is there should make me feel like that?" said O'Meara, emptying a cup. "No, no, I'm thinking you'll just have to put up with me as long as you live. But let's hear this tale of sorrows; 'twill be best for you to get it off your mind."

CHAPTER X

THE TURNING-POINT

THEREUPON I told him, in detail, all that had passed after he left the *loggia* of the palace, and all I had overheard—the Prince's amiable intention to be rid of me, Violante's plan to complete

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my disgrace, and the plot against the Princess Giulia. When I had finished he sat staring at me for some moments, then passed suddenly from bewilderment to fury, struck the table a violent blow, and began with Irish whole-heartedness and volubility to curse Antonio della Scala. By degrees he became enraptured with his own eloquence, and soared to such extraordinary heights that I, albeit in no mood for mirth, could not repress a burst of laughter.

"Be still, you madman!" I cried, still laughing. "How does such raving as that help us? I stand in need of calm thought now, if ever I stood so in all my life." I propped my elbows on the table and fell to thinking, while O'Meara watched me and favored me with a series of suggestions, each one more impossible than the last.

"Be Saint Patrick, and why should we let this villain strike the first blow? Let's march on the palace and take him prisoner!" he cried, his blue eyes sparkling with joy at the thought of battle.

"You forget that last week, when I took Lerino for my grateful Prince, I left the White Company within its walls to hold it should the Paduans try to win it back. Cortesia Seregno, Antonio's brother-in-law, is in command of them—he begged the honor of me, and one can not refuse such things to a Prince's kinsman. I have no more than twoscore men here in Verona. We could not take the palace with their help."

"Praise be, I have it!" cried the Irishman, with a war-whoop. "Fling yourself in Lerino! The White Company will defend you till the last man falls!"

I considered the suggestion for a moment, then dismissed it with a shake of the head. "No, that would be a fool's act. Lerino is too close to Padua, too much desired by Carrara. He would send out his forces to take it and me—would even join hands with Antonio in reducing an adventurer bold enough to seize a town claimed by two great princes."

"Be the powers, and you're right!" confessed O'Meara, with profound admiration. "'Tis a great head you have, no doubt of that. Well, and if you can't fight, then there's nothing left but to fly," he concluded reasonably.

"I could fly very easily," I answered, "though I should need to show discretion in the choosing of my place of refuge, for I have enemies in Italy at this time. No matter; if I have enemies, I have also friends. The Florentines and the Pisans have not forgotten what I did for them in past days, and would gladly shelter me for the sake of old times. They have better memories than Antonio della Scala."

"Begorra, then, let's get to horse and never draw rein till we're there," cried O'Meara, "for if the Prince gets a hint of what we're intending, sure he'll stop us before ever we're started!"

"YES," I said slowly, "you advise me to the sensible course, Michael. If I delay here, I am no better than a fool. But I think I shall not go."

"And why not?" the Irishman exclaimed, regarding me as if he thought my senses had forsaken me.

I was silent for a time, while the fire roared and the light of the candles flickered dully on the tapestried walls. "If we get to horse to-morrow morning and leave Verona behind us," I said, "what will become of the Princess Giulia?"

He looked still blanker. "'Tis mesilf is always most keen on the ladies," he said, penitently, "yet for the moment I had forgot her entirely; 'twas you I was considering, not the Princess, God bless her! Well, but what can you be after doing for her if you stay? 'Twill be down with the pair of ye, no less. I'm thinking you must just leave her to be wedded to the Prince, which is, after all, a fate many would envy her."

"She fears him," I answered. "Francesco Carrara is her kinsman and claims her as his ward, and he at least is a gentleman and a true prince, not a murderer and plotter like Antonio. In his hands she would be safe. If we could get her to Padua and give her over to the Duke——"

"Aye, but that's just what we can't do! 'Tis mad you are!" cred O'Meara, with emphasis. "See, now, I'll give you full a hundred reasons why there's naught but failure in such an attempt——"

"I lack patience to hear them," said I. "You are right as to danger, but I shall try it, whether or no. My mind is made up." And so it was, though even to me the enterprise appeared ridiculous. Why should I risk my life to help a proud, scornful girl who had poured disdain on my head and treated me like some lackey in disgrace? Yet I meant to fling myself into the worst danger of my life for her sake.

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"She'll not believe in your good intentions," cried O'Meara. "She'll die shrieking black hate at you before she'll trust you!"

"I shall help her without asking her leave," I answered grimly. "Leave it to me. A man who has won a hundred battles can conquer a girl and her whims, more especially when his life hangs on the issue."

"I'm thinking you know very little of the sex to say that," O'Meara rejoined sagely. "Faith, and I'd rather fight ten men than one woman; ye can have some idea what a man may do, judging by what you would do yourself in his stead; but whatever you give a woman credit for, sure and she's like to do the opposite, for contrariness, no less. And be the same token, if there's a thing in all the world you would give the heart from your body to keep her from doing, 'tis that thing and no other she'll do, choosing it from a thousand things you'd have fancied she'd like better. Ah, women are the divil, and that sweet little piece of perfection, Madonna Francesca, is the most maddening of all the sex!"

I MADE no comment on his profound philosophy, but returned to the subject under discussion. "Well, Michael, and will you help me in this?" I asked.

"'Tis the height of insanity!" he wailed, flinging up his hands in despair.

"Very well," I answered, my scant patience exhausted. "Since the business is so little to your liking, I will carry it out alone. Do you stay here in Verona, and when Antonio finds that you have left me he will not do you any harm."

The roar of mingled grief and rage which he emitted at this proposal might have been heard at the palace. When at length I had pacified him, it seemed taken for granted by both of us that the matter was settled, and we refilled our cups in preparation for an amicable conference as to details.

"And yet," O'Meara muttered, eying me curiously, "'tis amazed I am at you, no less. Instead of riding hard and fast for safety, you make nothing of your danger, and think only of a gallant rescue for a haughty lady who'll not thank us, like as not, for the trouble we're taking. Sure and you must be taken most madly by the lovely face of her. Is it that, Sir John, dear?"

I was leaning my elbows on the table and staring at the fire. "There is another reason than that," I answered, more to myself than to him. "As you say, this is a strange business for my doing, and I scarcely know myself what drives me to it. But I think—yes, I think it is because I desire to be friends again with the Black Prince."

I had not thought he would understand my meaning, or I should not have spoken, but Irishmen have keen wits. He kept silence a moment, not looking at me. "Yes, yes; I see," he muttered, and though his head was turned away I saw that he had tears in his eyes. "I see now, Sir John. And, be Saint Patrick," he added, with sudden energy, "we'll save her, or my name's not Michael O'Meara! I'll stick by you through thick and thin, and, impossible or not, we'll find a way to worst that knave of a Della Scala! *Erin go bragh*, then say I—and a health to you, Sir John!"

We clasped hands impulsively across the table, then looked ashamed of our emotion and settled back in our chairs to consider how best to conduct the perilous business to which we had pledged ourselves.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE BLACK WOOD

"AT THE road-inn near the Black Wood," Della Torre had said to his wife when recounting Antonio's plot. It was here that Gianni Potrero and his bravos were to seize the Princess if all went as the Prince and his abettors planned; and it was here that O'Meara and myself alighted quietly in the afternoon of the fateful day, having ridden merrily out of Verona with the rest of the hunting-party.

I had sent two trusty fellows to Florence, by different routes, with letters from me begging the Republic, for the sake of old times and my great services, to send a strong troop of men to my aid; and I believed that they would comply, for it was never the Florentine way to forget old allies—besides which, they were no friends to Antonio della Scala. Half-a-dozen of my men I had sent to the deserted castle near Vincenza where Gianni Potrero and his troopers meant to take the Princess.

I knew this place well, having spent a night within its walls more than once when on my way across country with my company. Despite its deserted condition it was

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a strong place, and I believed that it could be well defended. My six ruffians had taken heavy loads of provisions with which to stock the larder, and were to tinker with the bridge and see that the bolts and bars were firm; for it was my intention to seize Gianni's thunder—that is, to wrest the Princess from him, carry her to the very spot where he had planned to take her, and defend the walls until the force from Florence should arrive. Then I might send Madonna Giulia across the Paduan lines with a strong escort, and take myself off to Florence, to Pisa, or any other spot where I might get good hire for my sword. Wherever I might go my White Company could rejoin me, and we would renew our trade.

Some may wonder why I did not send to Lerino now for my troops, instead of writing to distant Florence; but my reason was simple enough. These mercenaries of mine fought not for pleasure, but for gain, and in such an enterprise as this they would have had small desire to help me. I looked for trouble with the twoscore men who were at hand, and whose help I must have were I to succeed. When they discovered that I was carrying off Antonio's cousin in his very teeth they would be sullen enough, and might turn against me. Well, I thought I could quell them.

AFTER all, win or lose, at least I was drawing sword for something other than gold, and was risking my life in a cause that Prince Edward and Sir John Chandos would have held worthy of me. It was in the highest of spirits that we came in sight of the rude little inn, and saw some hundred paces away from it the dense little grove known as the Black Wood.

"We will go there first," I said to O'Meara, "and find out whether all is as I ordered."

From a distance of ten feet the sharpest eyes could have perceived no sign of life, but on forcing our way in among the close-growing trees we found ourselves in the midst of a small force, made up of the thirty men with whose help I meant to free Madonna Giulia. They were a villainous-looking set of knaves, the pick of the White Company for skill and wild courage, and also, it must be admitted, for lawlessness and brutality. All had been through such scenes of raiding and pillaging and slaughter as had left them callous and inhuman, but all were excellent fighters, of a sort that might well wrest victory from the teeth of death.

"You are here, then—good!" I said, pulling up my horse. "Were you observed by any one as you came?"

"Not we, Sir John," answered the fellow in command, a rogue with a horrible scarred face, who had first seen the light of day in Paris, but had wandered through so many countries that he had well-nigh forgotten which was the land of his birth. "We came as quietly as mice. And we came none too soon; an hour ago Gianni Potrero rode up with his men, and they are now drinking yonder in the inn. Is it with them we are to fight, Sir John? I had thought he was a friend of the Prince, even as we are——"

"You think too much, and talk too much," I interrupted curtly. "Remember that I am Captain of this company. You will remain here till I sound my whistle yonder at the inn; then charge as you never charged before; throw down as many of Potrero's men as you may, and be prepared to ride off again in haste. Have you got this by heart? Good! I have no more time to lose, but must get on to the scene of battle."

Jacques scowled slightly, but gave back and asked no more questions. O'Meara and I left the wood, struck spurs to our mounts, and did not draw rein until we reached the inn.

The tumult inside was deafening. Apparently the troopers were passing the time of their long wait over the cups, and had reached a condition of great hilarity. We caught snatches of song, the rattle of dice, and the din of laughter. O'Meara and I tethered our horses at the door and were about to enter when a great swaggering figure lurched into the doorway, and a loud drunken voice hailed us in insolent accents:

"No room here, Messers!" cried the apparition, swaying tipsily from side to side. "This inn is full to-day. We are on the Prince's business, and want no audience. Ride on up the road, and in an hour's time you will find another stopping-place—but do not try to enter here, or ill will come of it." His speech broke into a hiccough.

It was one of Gianni Potrero's men, a black-visored, fierce giant whom I had seen many times in Verona, and of whom I knew no good. At the uproar he made, a dozen of his comrades came crowding into the doorway and emphasized his words with shouts

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and gestures. As for me, I knew better than to hesitate while dealing with such gentry. Setting my hat rakishly on one side and adopting an air as fierce and ruffling as their own, I advanced quickly to the door.

"Ill will come of it, did you say?" I roared at the spokesman. "You are right—but the ill will come to you if you dare stand in my path!" With this I seized the ruffian by the neck, buffeted him across the face, and flung him sprawling out on the ground. Then, before his comrades had recovered from their amazement, O'Meara and I had forced a way into the inn, pushing and elbowing and treading on the toes of all who barred our path.

THE great room within was full of roistering troopers. For a moment, so numerous did they appear, I wondered if my knaves would have any chance against them when the pinch came; but in a moment I saw that there were no more than twenty men in the room. When I sounded my whistle I would have the advantage by ten. I turned a composed smile on the crowd that came cursing round me, and on Gianni Potrero himself, who leaped up from a table by the window and came striding forward to see who dared intrude.

We were old enemies, this man and I, for he had long envied me the Prince's favor, and I had never hidden my contempt for him. Heaven knows my own profession was no exalted one, but still it was better than his, for I led out my men only in fair fight, whereas his troop got their living by murder—black, secret work such as they were bent on to-day—and all manner of knavery more fitted to cutthroat bravos than to soldiers. A ruler like Antonio della Scala had need of those who would do his bidding without question in various matters not fit for public knowledge. Gianni himself was a giant, hard and merciless as flint, with a villainous face burned well-nigh black from exposure and covered with great scars.

"Who dares come in here when halted in the Prince's name?" he thundered as he advanced. "Whoever you may be, my fine gentlemen, I'll have you lashed away with the stirrup-leathers to teach you respect for Della Scala!" He ended his speech with a torrent of oaths, which ceased abruptly as he recognized me. "Sir John Hawkwood!" he muttered, and scowled in a fashion which I took to mean that he would have found an additional zest in carrying out his threat now that he knew the name of the intruder.

"Yes, Sir John Hawkwood!" I said fiercely, facing him down. "And what of it? On my soul, my good friend, you and your men are rather too insolent to please me! Since when have you possessed the right to bar my way when I enter a public inn? Have you gone mad? Unless you come quickly to your senses I will take means to sober you!" and I laid my hand threateningly on my sword-hilt.

He gave back a step, scowling blackly on me. For a moment I saw his eyes roam about among his men, and it came home to me with unpleasant clearness that O'Meara and I were but two to twenty. "What business have you here?" he growled, apparently undecided what course to pursue. "We are on the Prince's affairs, and want this inn to ourselves."

"Then you want what you will not get!" I retorted curtly. "Do you think that you are the only man in Verona who rides on Prince Antonio's business? Am I not in his service, too, and far higher in it than yourself? How can you tell that he has not sent me here to learn whether you do the business to his liking?"

His scowl deepened, but he looked shaken. "And did he send you?" he snarled, at length.

"That, if you will pardon me," I retorted coolly, "is what I have no intention at all of telling you. You will learn nothing from me save this—that I am here on my own business; that I intend to remain here as long as it may please me, and that if you meddle with me it will be the maddest act of all your life!" With this benediction I turned my back on him, sat down at a table near the window and, appropriating a flask of wine that stood thereon, filled two cups for the refreshment of O'Meara and myself.

He lingered, regarding me with an expression of baffled rage. I was his better at sword-play, but with many evil qualities Gianni Potrero was no coward, and had we stood man to man I do not doubt that he would then and there have flown at my throat. But between us stood the shadow of Prince Antonio, a ruler who never forgave those who blundered or meddled with his will. I had been high in his favor for months past, and he had shown me such graciousness as he gave to few. Alas! poor Gianni could not know that all this was now over,

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and that the Prince, once my indulgent friend, was become my bitter enemy, nursing plans for my immediate disgrace. And I thanked heaven that he could not know it, for otherwise he and his troopers would have made short work of me before the whistle at my neck could have called my men to my assistance. As it was, he stood glowering at me for a moment in indecision; then, as I took no notice of him, he shrugged his shoulders with a black look.

"Have your way, then," he muttered. "But I warn you not to meddle with what I am to do here, unless you want trouble with the Prince. If I thought you came here without his bidding I would send you off in short order! Wait till we are both back in Verona, Sir John, and I'll teach you to treat me with more respect!"

"When you please," I answered, turning my head to laugh contemptuously at him. "I will serve you such a trick as I served my Lord Raimondo yesterday, and all Verona will laugh at your expense. For the present, leave me in peace. I have no love for that ruffian's face of yours, Messer Gianni, and had rather you bestowed it elsewhere."

He turned on his heel with an oath and a muttered promise to mar my face into a worse condition than his at some not distant day, and seated himself at the next table, where he proceeded to watch me narrowly. I took no notice of him, but began to drink and jest with O'Meara. The Irishman, who was always particularly bland in moments of danger, produced cards from his pouch, and we began to play, pushing a steadily growing pile of gold back and forth across the table as the luck ran with one or the other. Potrero regarded us steadily, his men stared at us, shook their fists furtively, and muttered profane comments on our presence. Perhaps an hour went by in this fashion, and I saw that Potrero was beginning to forget us in the anticipation of the Princess's coming.

I heard the sound of hoofs, very faint at first, then growing louder. In a moment the troopers heard it, too, and leaped up with a shout. Potrero strode about among them in a fury, silencing them with blows and curses. "To your tables, all of you!" he stormed. "No man is to take notice of the party or to make a move till I give the signal. We are not to appear to expect them—must seem that we form the plan on seeing her in our power." He drove them into their seats, resumed his own, and waited, tense in every limb.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT IN THE INN

THE clatter of hoofs came closer, and now, looking from the window, I could see the party approaching. In a moment Della Torre had pulled up his horse before the inn and was speaking back across his shoulder to those behind. He looked magnificently handsome in his hunting-habit of gold and scarlet, a plumed hat shading his face and a hooded hawk clinging to his wrist; but he looked darkly angry as well, and I suspected at once that all had not gone to his liking.

In another instant I understood. The rest of the party had come up, and I saw not only the splendid, haughty Madonna Violante and the slim figure of the Princess, but also Madonna Francesca, and a fat, pompous gentleman in gold and green, who was, if my eyes did not deceive me, no other than Raimondo del Mayno. In a flash I understood that the favorite had only partially succeeded in his plan. He had separated Madonna Giulia from the hunting-party, as had been agreed, and had brought her safe to the inn, but in some fashion Francesca and Del Mayno had contrived to remain with them.

What was said outside I could not hear, but from Della Torre's gestures I gathered that he was urging them to enter the inn for rest and refreshment before proceeding on their way. All except the Princess appeared willing enough, and Del Mayno, who had, no doubt, reached an age when a day in the saddle was more wearying than agreeable, plainly assented to the proposition with enthusiasm. For a time they all clustered around Madonna Giulia, urging her, and at length she nodded her head slightly and prepared to dismount. A moment later they were at the door of the inn.

"'Tis my pretty Francesca, bless her heart!" O'Meara whispered, and I trod savagely on his foot as a hint for silence.

At the threshold they paused, and the Princess, who was in advance, threw a startled look about at the crowd of black-faced troopers. "The place is full," she said across her shoulder to Della Torre. "Let us go on. I have no mind to sit among a band of soldiers."

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"Stay but a few moments, Princess," Violante urged. "Indeed, I can go no farther now—I am faint with the sun and lack of food. These are but a troop of the Prince's men, riding somewhere on his business; we have nothing to fear from them."

"I am not afraid," said the Princess coldly. The word had been a shrewd one, for it sent her forward at once into the room. Della Torre followed her closely, shouting to the troopers to make room for their betters, and to the host, whose frightened face appeared at the kitchen-door, to bring wine. The party sat [illegible] Gianni Po-

There was a stir and a movement. Half the troopers were going out quietly, and I guessed their aim—to bring the horses to the door. Giulia stared haughtily at them as they passed her, and drew away the hem of her habit. "A rare company you have brought me among!" she said angrily.

"Why, Princess," Violante murmured, with some malice in her slow smile, "are you so dainty that the mere passing of these fellows hurts you?"

Giulia gave her a straight glance that held both suspicion and anger. "Be patient with me. Remember that, not having been born like you to a lower rank, I know nothing of such men," she answered, and [illegible]'s wife bit her lip.

[illegible]bdued noise without—the [illegible]ght around. Potrero [illegible]nse and ready. At [illegible]roached Della [illegible]eat, and Del [illegible]nksgiving. [illegible] "Eat [illegible]to you [illegible]ying, [illegible]od.

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naturally enough, for one of Potrero's troopers. Then, even as O'Meara sprang back to join me, I heard the clatter of hoofs, cries of fright from the men without, and the shouts of my own ruffians as they flung themselves from their horses and came into the inn with swords already bloody from the brief conflict outside.

THE Princess had sprung to her feet. She was tense in every limb, but made no sign of fright. Francesca clung to her, moaning with terror and putting her hands across her eyes to shut out the evil faces all about her. As for me, I shouted furiously to my men to stand between me and Potrero and keep a clear path to the door, and they obeyed me. There was a wild clashing of swords, a circling and parrying, a fight hand to hand. I had the advantage in numbers, and my men were the more skilful; but all my thoughts were fixed on getting quickly away before the tide of battle turned.

I caught the Princess up, put my left arm around her, and took my sword in my free hand. She fought me furiously, but without making any outcry. Francesca clung to her desperately until O'Meara, coming up, caught her and raised her in his arms, she screaming and scratching the while like a madwoman. "Close around us, keep the others off us!" I cried to my men, and as they obeyed me I ran from the inn and found the horses waiting at the door.

It had all taken place so quickly that Potrero's men were utterly dazed, some of them taking us for a reenforcement, others screaming that the Paduans were on them, and the remainder, taken unprepared, giving back in bewilderment. Della Torre had not yet discovered that anything was wrong, and believed us all to be members of the party chosen for the Princess's capture. Violante had fallen forward in a pretended swoon; but to my amazement old Del Mayno had kept close beside his niece, and was at my elbow as I reached the door. He seemed dazed, and made no effort to draw his sword, so it was a mystery to me why he should thrust himself in among us. I suppose that since for many years now he had enjoyed great honor by virtue of being the Princess's uncle, it had become second nature with him to follow her wherever she might go, and such was his impulse even at a wild moment like this.

Potrero was shrieking to his men to rally and cut us off. They began to draw together, and presently surged forward; but now we had reached the horses and were mounting. A dozen of my men wheeled about, in obedience to my order, and barred the door of the inn till we were in the saddle, then rushed out to mount themselves. Del Mayno had clambered clumsily on a riderless horse and was striving desperately to keep beside me and my burden. The sight made me laugh.

As I put spurs to my good mount, Potrero and his men burst out of the inn, raging and cursing. After them came Della Torre, with the bewildered look of one who begins to perceive that all is not right. "Farewell, my Lord Ranucio!" I cried, waving my sword at him. "Tell the Prince his plot has failed. He must sharpen his wits if he wishes to try a throw with me!"

"A thousand curses!" cried the favorite, his face black with fury. "It is Sir John Hawkwood!"

CHAPTER XIII

CASTEL PAURA

FOR some time I was too much occupied in putting the greatest possible space between ourselves and our foes to give any attention to the lady in my arms. She had ceased her struggling as soon as I got to saddle, thus displaying, it struck me, an amount of common sense hardly to be expected in a woman—for had she continued to fight for freedom she might easily enough have fallen from my racing horse and come to serious harm. We fairly flew across the country, crossing meadows and hills and woods as though our mounts had wings to their feet; but we went none too fast for my taste, and I was angry enough when at length I saw some among my troopers give signs of slackening speed.

"What are you about there?" I cried, and cursed them furiously. "Do you think I wish to be overtaken by Gianni and his men? Is this a pleasure-party, that you dally here and linger there? Set spurs to your horses, I say, and ride like men, not weary girls—or when we reach the castle I will have a word to say to the loiterers!"

"Faith, never worry over Gianni Potrero and his men, Sir John," cried a knave with a Flemish accent, spurring up to my side.

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"They will not be like to pursue us for many a good hour—I have seen to that!"

"And how, fool? Are you a sorcerer, then?" I asked impatiently.

"Nay, God forbid," said he, and crossed himself; for the worst of my men showed remains of religion at unexpected times. "But one need not be a sorcerer to understand horses, Sir John. I was wearied lying in the wood yonder waiting for your whistle to blow, and so was Franz here; and to pass the time we crept up unseen to the inn stable, and so doctored all Messer Gianni's steeds that they will carry their masters very little distance either to-day or to-morrow. So, you see, there is no need that we should kill ourselves with hard riding."

"You are a shrewd fellow, Pierre," I cried, "and you shall not lose by this business, be sure of that. Nevertheless, we will not slacken speed. I shall feel more at ease when I have a castle wall about me."

Somewhat reassured by this new development, I now took time to glance down at the Princess, whose continued stillness had amazed me. No wonder she was limp and motionless, however; for, as I now discovered, she was in a dead swoon.

The sight shocked me unreasonably. I had seen many and many a man lose his senses, yes, and die, sometimes in horrible suffering, but this was the first time I had held a fainting woman in my arms. After all, I assured myself, there was no cause for alarm—she had swooned for terror, and would come to herself none the worse for it. Perhaps, indeed, it was better so, for in her right senses she would have made my task doubly hard.

It was natural, too. In all her sheltered, luxurious life she had known no danger, and this sudden attack of a crowd of villainous-faced troopers had proved too much for her, although, up to the very instant when her consciousness failed, she had met the danger bravely and struggled against me like any seasoned soldier. It gave me an absurd pleasure to remember that she had made no moan or outcry. She was a woman, but she had the spirit of a brave man.

I looked down at her as she lay limp in my clasp, and a sudden wave of pity came over me, blotting out all else, making me forget the free-lances around me as completely as if she and I had had the whole world to ourselves. How young she was, though they called her Princess and bent before her and flattered her! She was scarcely more than a child, and would have been a surpassingly sweet one but for the pride of place that had been taught her from her birth. I could see her white eyelids through the slits in her mask; her red mouth was bare, and her chin; both looked very soft and innocent.

Her head rested on my shoulder as confidingly as if she knew and trusted me instead of hating and despising me. Its light weight seemed to burn me, and I thought how pure and beautiful she was, and that I was utterly unworthy to touch her. I was glad that I had undertaken to save her from Antonio della Scala. Even if I lost my life in the attempt, what did it matter to any on earth whether I lived or died? While she——

Madonna Francesca was still in O'Meara's care. She was in a sad state, torn between terror of us who seized her and carried her off, and fear of a fall from the racing horse beneath her. The latter dread proved the stronger, and she was clinging to O'Meara as if he were her one hope of salvation, tightening her clasp convulsively each time his mount swerved or shied, gasping, sobbing, giving vent to desperate lamentations and prophecies of her fast-approaching doom.

The Irishman was far more concerned and distressed than he would have been by the prospect of a deadly conflict with Gianni Potrero's men, and was making superhuman efforts to soothe and reassure her. He poured out protestations that no harm was intended; that she was as safe as in the Prince's palace at Verona; he declared that soon she should rest and revive herself, and implored her in the tenderest manner to trust to him and have no fear of anything.

He might have spared his breath to better advantage. She heard nothing and saw nothing; all her faculties were concentrated on keeping a firm hold around his neck and escaping from being hurled to earth. As for O'Meara, despite his distress in her behalf, I think he found a hint of pleasure in the situation, for I noted an expression of shame-faced rapture overspread his face each time her arms tightened convulsively about him.

IT WAS dark when we neared the end of our journey, and, riding quickly through a dark green wood, came on a tiny hill in its midst, crowned by

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the deserted place known as Castel Paura. It had been a noble stronghold once, and had still the grim lowering air of the defiant fortress. I breathed a prayer that my knaves had prepared food and fire for our coming, for the night air was cold, and we were one and all in need of comfort.

As we approached I sounded the horn that hung about my neck, and immediately lights shone out at the windows and a hoarse cry of welcome was raised by the men within. We were at the dark moat now, and a tottering, unsteady drawbridge was being lowered to give us entrance. Riding across it in imminent danger of being dashed down to perdition, we passed under the portcullis and into the outer court, where the men I had sent in advance came crowding round with lighted torches.

"Have you done as I bade, and prepared the place for our holding?" I demanded. "You have patched the drawbridge up, I see; good! What of the walls? They are broken in parts, but are they so far gone we can not man them?"

"Oh, we have made a brave stand in worse places than this, Sir John," one of them answered cheerfully, then paused open-mouthed and stared at the Princess's figure huddled in my arms. None of them had gathered the aim of my enterprise as yet, and, to speak truth, I looked forward with no great anticipation to the moment when light should break in on them.

"Well, why do you stand there, staring like a fool?" I demanded sharply. "Have you kindled a fire and prepared supper for us? Lead on to the hall, and let me see how you have spent your time. Heaven send, for your own sakes, that you have not wasted it, for I am in no very easy humor to-night! What! have you never seen a woman before, that your eyes must pop from your head at sight of a mask and a riding-cloak?"

They drew back in a circle, cowed by my roughness, and we rode through to an inner court, where we dismounted. Bearing the Princess in my arms, I strode up a flight of stone steps and passed through a carved doorway into the great hall of the castle.

At a former time, when hung with brocades and set forth with costly furniture, this apartment must have been a magnificent one. Now the walls were bare, the floor crumbling, and the ceiling cracked and hung with a thousand cobwebs. Nevertheless, the presence of my men had already driven away a part of the gloom. A great fire blazed cheerfully in the wide chimney, scattered cloaks and weapons lent an air of habitation to floor and walls, and meat roasting above the flames sent forth an odor far from displeasing to one as hungry as myself.

I STRODE across the room to a broken wood settle that stood beneath the window, laid the Princess upon it and, dropping on my knees beside her, began to chafe her hands. She lay motionless, not stirring, not seeming to breathe. My mercenaries came crowding into the hall after me, and stood herded at a distance, staring at me with round eyes. I had no name among them as a lover of women, and they were surprised enough to see me bringing back two ladies in my train.

"Where did he get her, eh?" one demanded of another. "Who is she, and why has he brought her here?"

Pierre shrugged his shoulders. "She is the Princess Giulia, Della Scala's cousin," he answered. "We carried her off from the inn near the Black Wood. Gianni Potrero was there for the same purpose, but we worsted him and got the prize. That is her lady-in-waiting that Messer O'Meara is just bringing in. As for the why and the wherefore of the business, I know no more about it than a babe unborn."

Jacques joined them, looking sour and dissatisfied. "This affair is not to my taste," I heard him mutter. "See you, if we carry off the Prince's cousin we are surely no longer in the Prince's service—is not that common sense? Well, and if we are against him, how is this to profit us, tell me that? We shall run great danger and gain nothing. What does it mean?"

"I do not know, and, what is more, I have no mind to ask Sir John!" Pierre answered with a grin. "You had best leave him alone, too, if you value a whole skin. For my part, I will trust him and ask no questions, even if he leads us straight on the city of Verona. He has never yet undertaken an enterprise that proved unlucky for us, nor will he now. He has a better head than any of us, else why should we serve under him as we do?"

Francesca had come in, still clinging to O'Meara. Poor child! the deserted place and the evil, scarred faces turned on her in the torchlight made her believe herself in a bad dream, and she looked instinctively for

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protection to the Irishman, the only one of us all whom she knew. As yet she had not seemed to realize his share in her misfortunes, though no doubt she would visit this on him heavily later on. The sight of Giulia took her mind from her own selfish fears, and she ran forward with a little cry, falling on her knees beside me and catching her friend's hands.

I rose to my feet and looked about the room. Never before had I known what ruffians my troopers appeared. It filled me with anger that they should gaze on the Princess in her swoon, and the thought of her terror, should she wake to find them all about her, struck me like a blow. "Have you got nothing better to do than stand there gaping?" I asked roughly. "You have left the bridge down, I'll be bound, and the portcullis up! Pretty soldiers, you! Begone and see the castle is secure—or stop! Is any room but this heated by a fire and in a state to be occupied?"

One of the men stammered that he had kindled a fire in the room off the upper gallery, and had prepared it as well as he might for my housing.

"Good!" I answered, and raising the Princess in my arms I ran up the great staircase of carved stone, through a wide fretted gallery and into a room hung with faded tapestry falling to pieces from decay. A broken couch stood near the fire, and on this I gently placed the Princess. Francesca had followed me closely, and now knelt by her lady and began to remove her mask and cloak, quite forgetful of her terror the instant another needed her aid, like the true woman she was.

"We'd best be leaving them alone," O'Meara said to me from the doorway.

I nodded. "Do you stay here and see that none of the men come meddling," I answered, as I swung round on my heel and went down the stairs to the great hall.

CHAPTER XIV

A SUMMONS

THE shouts of rude glee that came to my ears as I descended warned me that the knaves had found some pleasant mode of diversion. I was ready for anything as I joined them, but so completely had Raimondo del Mayno passed from my mind in the hurry of the flight that I felt a shock of amazement as I saw his pompous figure in the midst of a crowd of my troopers.

He had ridden with us all the way from the inn—no easy jaunt for a man of his years and size. And now, finding himself pulled from his horse and thrust none too gently into a ruined castle which his high-strung nerves immediately colored as a fitting spot for a murder, it was small wonder if his heart failed him. His fat face was very pale above the splendor of his green and gold hunting-dress, and he wavered somewhat on his feet, partly from stiffness, but more from alarm. Nevertheless it had apparently occurred to him that his best hope was in a show of boldness, and he was trying to address my men in the imperious, hectoring fashion he used in Verona.

My men were in an ecstasy of amusement. They louted low before him, with exaggerated gestures of respect; they begged him in broken voices to spare them, to plead with Prince Antonio for them, to have mercy on a set of poor but honest rogues who were his humble servants. They dried mock tears with the backs of their hands, and fell sobbing on each others' breasts. Some carried the jest so far as to kneel with clasped hands raised in fervent appeals for grace. My lord, growing paler and paler, stared at them round-eyed, as if doubting his own sanity. "Come, brothers, we dare not keep him prisoner, we must let him go!" one cried, in a paroxysm of feigned terror. They surged apart and left an open way to the door, and Del Mayno, a gleam of hope lighting up his face, darted forward. Instantly they surged in upon him again with a hoarse battle-cry that made him yelp wildly for fright. It was boisterous horse-play, to be sure, but it was side-splitting, and I stood on the lowest stair, laughing till the tears filled my eyes.

"Come, my friends," I said at last, striding forward, "by your leave I will have a word with this grand gentleman."

The circle gave back before me, and I found myself face to face with my lord, who straightened himself and made a brave effort to awe me with his royal manner.

"Do you command here, then?" he demanded haughtily. "You will do well to end this outrage and let us go, for if the Prince——"

He started and paused as I thrust my hat back from my eyes, for until this instant he had not recognized me. The expression on his fat face was ludicrous—all its pretense

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at grandeur fell away, and his anger merged into a horror so intense that I stood helpless, rocking from side to side with laughter.

"Ah, I see you know me," I said, when I could get my breath. "I am your old friend Giovanni Guglia, and see, I have brought my needle with me! Shall I give you another such dancing-lesson as I gave yesterday in the Prince's *loggia?* Why, one might think you were not pleased to see me! You have not a cordial manner, my good lord!"

He gasped and retreated from me wildly, then made a last clutch at his vanished dignity. "Sir John Hawkwood," he bleated, somewhat in the fashion of a frightened sheep, "what does this mean? Why have you brought us here?"

"My good friend," I answered bluntly, "I have not brought you here, nor do I mean that you shall stay here. You chose to get to horse and follow us—that is your affair, not mine; if you fancy a long ride I have nothing to say. But we are like to have to stand a siege in this place, and our provisions are none too plentiful, so you can understand that I have no desire for an extra mouth within the gate. I fancy you eat very heartily, is it not so? Your girth hints as much. Well, you can not eat here. Go out and mount your horse, and make your way back to Verona! You shall be my ambassador to the Prince—tell him that Gianni Potrero is a fool, and that he will do well to find a soldier with better wits to carry out his plots and plans!"

Del Mayno stared at me in dismay. "You will send me away now, at night, without food?" he stammered.

"Surely," said I. "We are not your stewards, my lord. Besides, I thought it was your greatest desire, a moment since, to leave us."

He stamped his foot in a weak fury. "I will not go and leave my niece in your hands!" he stormed. "I will stay here; you can not force me away!"

"You will not go?" I repeated grimly. And for a full moment I stared at him, while his courage oozed visibly under my eyes. "Well, it is all the same to me. I will get rid of you in another way, then. Pierre—Franz!"

The two stepped forward promptly. They were as evil-looking a pair as any men on earth, and Del Mayno shrank away from them with a grunt of horror.

"Take this old fool up on the battlements," I said coolly, "and set him to dangle by the neck."

FRANZ and Pierre caught Lord Raimondo promptly by the arms, exchanging winks of amusement across his head. He cried out wildly, but they paid no heed at all, and dragged him to the door amid the cheering and laughter of the others.

"No, no, not that!" he roared piteously. "Spare me, Sir John Hawkwood—let me go, and I will ride back to Verona this very night and take your message to the Prince!"

"Very good, I will be merciful, though I stand amazed at my own patience," I answered sternly, repressing my laughter. "Take him across the moat instead of to the battlements, you, and give him his horse, and see him started. Godspeed, my lord, and remember Giovanni della Guglia in your prayers!"

He was now only too eager to be gone. The two troopers led him out, none too gently, and presently their footsteps died away in the outer court. I turned back into the hall. My men were roaring with laughter at the comedy, but my mirth had passed, leaving a sick disgust and contempt behind. He was a poor creature, this noble of Verona—in his anguish for his own safety he had forgotten his niece as completely as if she did not exist.

A hand fell lightly on my shoulder, and I turned to face O'Meara. He was looking at me strangely with solemn eyes that concealed a twinkle in their depths. "Well, man, what is it?" I asked impatiently.

He jerked his thumb in the direction of the stairs. "She would speak with ye," he announced, in the solemn manner of one issuing a proclamation.

"The Princess?" I exclaimed. "She has come to herself, then?" He nodded speechlessly. "What ails you?" I cried, irritated at his reticence. "Have you lost your tongue, that you can not tell me what she wants?"

"I'm thinking you'll be after wishing some one else had lost a tongue before many minutes," he observed mysteriously. "As for what she wants, 'tis she will tell you that. I'm confident she'll do the subject full justice. And now may the Virgin have mercy on your soul, Sir John!" he spluttered, retreating to the fire in a sudden irrepressible

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burst of laughter. "I'd a deal rather face the Paduans, mesilf!"

It was with no very lively anticipation that I went slowly up the stairs. And yet, perversely enough, I was pleased at the fact that she had sent for me. She had no fear; I might kill her, but I could never break her spirit, and the knowledge gave me a ridiculous pleasure. Few women on earth, I believed, would have done aught but cower weeping above, listening to the rude sounds of mirth below and praying to be left in solitude. The Prince's cousin was cast in a different mold, and I honored her for it, and was more than ever glad that I had risked my life to help her. But I had something the feeling of a schoolboy as I crossed the gallery and passed through her door.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRIDE OF BIRTH

THE fire was blazing merrily, throwing bright gleams on the moldering tapestry and lighting the ceiling, which was covered by a faded painting in blue and gold. The women's cloaks and masks were piled on the floor by the couch, and a whip with a jeweled handle lay at the threshold, where it had fallen from Madonna Francesca's hands.

The Princess was standing in the center of the room, her head thrown back, her dark eyes regarding me steadily. She was very pale, and her breath came a trifle fast, but there was no fear in her face—only anger and scorn that might well have shriveled me had I been the creature of her fancy. The light gleamed on her green dress, on its heavy silver broidery, and on the jewels at her throat; she had the look of a splendid statue.

Madonna Francesca, all her brief courage gone now that her lady no longer needed her aid, was crouching against the wall with tears on her cheeks. I had entered, I thought, in a most quiet fashion—indeed, I fear my manner might have been described as foolish and shamefaced—but the clash of my spurs and the glitter of my cuirass proved too much for O'Meara's charming enchantress, who shrieked, ran forward, and flung herself kneeling beside Giulia, clutching with trembling fingers at her gown.

"Hush, Francesca! hush!" said the Princess, putting an arm around her, but not withdrawing her straight gaze from mine. "Be calm, child. Are you afraid of such creatures as this man?" Her eyes burned me as she went on. "Sir John Hawkwood, I have sent for you to demand the meaning of this most dastardly and unknightly outrage done on me and my friend! Speak, sir!" she cried, her anger growing at my silence. "Are you a false knight, a villain, a coward? Have you brought me here to murder me? Speak! Do not stand there staring, you that are unworthy to rest your eyes upon me! Oh, it maddens me that I must breathe the same air with a thing so vile as you! Tell me why you have done this, what I must expect—then leave me, for your presence is more than I can bear!"

Her words were hard ones, yet I felt no resentment, for so I would have had her face the man who had served her as she believed with reason that I had done. She was magnificently beautiful in her brave defiance, and I felt a rush of pride in her spirit, a desire to salute her with my sword as I might have saluted a brave soldier whom I had met in battle.

"Princess," I said quietly, "you do me great wrong, but I can not blame you, since you know nothing of the causes of my action. Will you listen patiently to what I desire to tell you."

"I have no wish to listen to you!" she cried passionately. "Tell me in a word what you desire of me. Your soldiers have the air of men who would find murder a merry pastime! Will you hold me to ransom? That would be a plan worthy of Sir John Hawkwood, mercenary, free-lance, noble gentleman who sells his sword for *scudi* and auctions himself to all the rulers of Europe! Oh, I had not believed that any man who wore a knight's spurs could do so vile a deed!"

THERE was rising irritation in my heart now. She was too proud, this girl! She had never learned that high birth may be a poor thing if unbolstered by something more. After all, it ill became those who bought my services to jeer at me for rendering them. I had brought her house great gain, and, when all was said and done, a trade in which I risked my life almost daily could not be wholly despicable.

"But I understand—it is not the knight who has planned and carried out this pretty

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scheme," she continued bitterly. "It is the tanner's son, the peasant, the man who, here in Verona, would never have owned a sword, but would have been set to labor for his betters! Perhaps I have been too hard on you, after all—what should such as you know of truth and honor?"

I controlled myself with an effort. "Listen to me, Princess," I said coldly. "It is quite true that I am not of high birth; it is true that all my life has not been lived on a noble level. But I swear to you that when I brought you here to-day at risk of my own death, I did the noblest thing that I have ever done!"

"And a rare and knightly life yours has been, then, and an honor to chivalry," she cut me short, "if the capture of two helpless women may take such high rank among its deeds!"

"Princess," I said, with what grim patience I could muster, "if I were indeed the man you think me, you would serve yourself very ill by the uttering of such words!"

"Ah, Madonna Giulia, for the dear Virgin's sake let him be!" Francesca moaned, pressing her face against her lady's dress in an agony of terror.

"Hush, child!" Giulia answered soothingly. "If we are to die, let us at least die bravely! Come, you will not let this man think that you fear him?"

"There is no need of any fear," I said, getting in my word at last. "You are safe here, both of you, and I swear that all I have done to-day has been in your service——"

"In our service! And how, pray? Such a tale is very credible, is it not?" the Princess scoffed mercilessly. She threw her eyes about the bare, gloomy room, shivering in spite of herself. Only a dauntless resolution held her from despair, and I knew it, despite her brave front. "I could gladly dispense with such services, Sir John! But you have not yet informed me of your object. Is it ransom? Surely even one so base as you can not have done this thing for pure diversion —you must have had a purpose?"

Oh, it was hopeless, the whole of it! I could have groaned to think that I had ever hoped to persuade her of my honesty. If now I told her the tale from the beginning to the end, if I painted Antonio della Scala in all his baseness, would she credit a word of what I said? I shrugged my shoulders and set my teeth, and vowed that I would save her despite herself. I would hold this castle till the Florentines sent me succor; then she should go, well guarded, to Padua—and once there, Francesco Carrara would never let her escape. For years he had claimed her as his ward, and twice he had made unsuccessful attempts to seize her. He would guard her well, and when her first anger had passed she would be happy, for he was a kindly man and no doubt would show her all indulgence.

AS I STOOD blackly reflecting, with her watching me coldly, we heard heavy footsteps in the gallery without, and after a moment Franz and Pierre appeared at the door, one bearing food and wine and the other carrying a sadly broken table, found somewhere in the castle. "It was Messer O'Meara bade us come," Pierre explained hastily, as I wheeled about to see the meaning of the intrusion. "He said, Sir John, you would be wishing the two ladies to break fast after their long ride."

I welcomed the diversion. "A good thought," I answered. "Come, lay out the table. We are all worn with riding and will feel the better for food."

The two men moved busily about their work, throwing curious side glances at the women. Francesca broke into renewed sobbing and clung to the Princess as to her one hope in life, brokenly whispering prayers. Madonna Giulia stood rigid and motionless, but her dark eyes followed every movement of the two fellows with a resolutely controlled dread and horror that went to my heart. They were not such evil rogues, Franz and Pierre—indeed, I reckoned them among the best and most faithful of my troop. Nevertheless, I could well fancy the terror of two sheltered girls at finding themselves at the mercy of such men, in a castle far from any help or protection, and the thought softened me again toward the dauntless little lady who confronted dangers so far removed from her luxurious life, and never faltered or showed her fright.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRINCESS ACTS

I SENT the men away when their work was done, and as they passed the door the Princess and Francesca breathed audible sighs of relief—though I have small doubt they both thought me well-nigh as formidable as my troopers. I had seen so many peo-

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ple gain courage by virtue of food and wine, so many tempers soothed by the same means, that I was inclined to bless O'Meara for his inspiration. "Come, sit, Madonna," I urged her. "You are weary, and no wonder, for what you have endured to-day might well have tired a strong man."

She shook her head angrily. "I will not sit at table with you!" she said bitterly. "I will not break bread with you, Sir John Hawkwood! You have me here in your power, and you can kill me if you choose, but you can never make me deal on equal terms with a tanner's son and a cutthroat bravo!"

Again I shrugged, trying to hide from her how the words hurt me. Indeed, after a moment's reflection I forgot my own discomfiture in a kind of amused pity for her. She was white and tired, poor child, and the look she cast toward the table told me plainly enough that the roughly cooked meat—a dish which in the palace at Verona she would have rejected with scorn—tempted her not a little now. Yet she would go hungry sooner than sit down with me! Oh, she was very young, the pretty termagant, and it were foolishness on my part to take seriously a word she said. As for Madonna Francesca, that charming lady was apparently of a very different mind from her mistress.

"Oh, why should we refuse?" she whispered pathetically, staring with obvious longing at the steaming food. "We spite ourselves, not him—and, after all, is it worse to sit at table with him than to stand in the room with him, as we needs must do as long as he chooses to remain? I have eaten nothing since early morning. What good to go supperless from pride?"

"If you hesitate only from distaste to my company," I cut in before the Princess could speak, "reassure yourselves, I beg. It was not my intention to sit down with you, and if you choose I will leave the room and remain away from you till your meal is ended. Will that content you, Princess? Only, I entreat, do not fast any longer, for you are not accustomed to such privations."

As I spoke I saw a quick change in her expression, a gleam in her eyes, followed immediately by a cautious glance at me to discover if I had noted it. Since I looked as stolid and grim as ever, she apparently took it for granted that I had seen nothing—but I had, and I was quite aware that a plan had come to her in that instant, and that she was going to set her wits against mine. After a moment she confirmed my guess by moving slowly and reluctantly toward the table, seating herself and looking up at me with what she no doubt fancied was a softened air.

"After all, Sir John, it may be that I wrong you," she said, trying to keep the anger from her voice and render it gentle. "You say that you have wished to serve me—it may be so, though I confess I do not understand. My cousin trusts you—surely you would not act altogether evilly to me who am kin to him." She paused an instant as if to constrain herself to her part, then added, with an obvious effort, "Sit with us, Sir John; it is my desire."

I SEATED myself at her right hand, suppressing a smile. Did she fancy that by softer words and cajolements she might persuade me to set her free? However, I was but too glad if for any cause she would cease raging at me and eat the food which she must sorely need after her wild ride and her swoon. I served her, and she thanked me with an effort at graciousness, then began to eat slowly and without looking at her plate. Not so Madonna Francesca, who fell on her share with avidity, and I think forgot for the nonce all her peril in the pleasant occupation of clearing her dish. As for me, I ate heartily, for I had a true soldier's appetite, and had yet to see the emotion that should put me out of temper with my supper.

For a time none of us spoke, and the silence, the ruddy fire, and the fact that a strange lull seemed to have fallen on us, set me dreaming. I began to eat more slowly, staring the while at the Princess as though I would have learned her face by heart. Surely she was the most beautiful thing on which my eyes had ever rested, though in my long years of soldiering I had seen many foreign Courts and many famous and lovely ladies.

Her black hair had dragged loose about her forehead; its soft shadow made her face seem whiter, her eyes darker, her lips more scarlet. I cursed myself bitterly for a fool, and tried to turn my thoughts to other things. Why had she changed her manner toward me so suddenly? It was not from any relenting. Even now I could see that, despite her pretense at calm, she was laboring under great emotion.

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Some movement of Madonna Francesca's roused her, and she looked up and caught my eye. "You said, Sir John," she began, still with that resolute pretense at graciousness, "that you would tell me of your reasons for all these strange doings. I am more myself now, and can hear you patiently. Will you not begin at once?"

"Surely, Princess," I answered readily. "It will be a hard tale for you to believe, I know that; but I swear to you by all I hold sacred that I will tell you nothing but the truth. And I think you may believe me, for the reason that I stand to gain nothing by what I have done, but rather to lose my life unless all goes according to my hopes. What I have to say, Madonna, concerns your cousin, Antonio della Scala——"

I broke off abruptly. At the beginning of my speech she had swayed close to me as if in eager attention; but her face had held no consciousness of what I said, only a strained white look of intentness. And now, suddenly as a flash of lightning, her hand flew out, seized the handle of my dagger, and brought it hissing from its sheath. I caught the gleam of the steel poised above me, and heard a low terror-smitten cry from Madonna Francesca. Then, with the unconscious impulse of the trained soldier, I acted. My own hand went out mechanically, caught the Princess's wrist, and arrested it just as the dagger reached my breast. The sharp point tore the folds of my cloak, pricked my flesh, then stopped; and I stood breathing hard, my clutch still on the girl's arm, the bright blade still poised against me.

A hundred times I had been in danger of my life and had escaped only by a hair's breadth, but never had any attempt at killing struck me with such amazement and left me in a state of such bewildered emotion. She, the Princess, had tried to plunge my own dagger into my heart! The words beat themselves again and again into my ears, stunning me. I could not believe it—I would have fancied myself in a dream had not the light, flashing on the steel, given me visible proof of what had passed, and a hint at what might have been.

I HAD Madonna Giulia's wrist in my grasp. She stood motionless, staring at me in breathless fascination, as if waiting for me to strike her down. Under the pressure of my fingers her hand opened and the dagger rang clattering at our feet. Our eyes met in a straight look, and her face drew into lines of desperate anger and despair; but even now she gave no sign of fear, nor did she make any effort to pull herself loose from my grasp. Madonna Francesca cried out and caught at my arm.

"So, Princess," I said slowly, looking at her, "you thought to kill me, eh? To stab me while I sat with you at the table, and while you shared my bread?"

She stared back at me, not pulling away, hardly seeming to breathe. "Yes, I thought to stab you!" she said passionately. "Why not? You have imprisoned me for some evil purpose of your own—for all I know, it may be your life or mine. I come of a race that can hate well, that strikes its enemies! Oh, have I not good cause to kill you, Sir John Hawkwood, you that have brought me to this horrible place for some horrible purpose?"

After a pause I laughed grimly and released her. She fell back a little, still staring at me wildly. I picked up my dagger, regarded the blade critically, and sheathed it; then strode across the room to the door, and with my foot on the threshold turned and looked back. Madonna Francesca had run to the Princess, and the two were clinging to each other, their eyes following me in fascinated wonder.

"It is a mistake, Princess," I said coolly, "to try to stab an old soldier who is far quicker with the dagger than any lady could be. I am used to such attempts on my life, and I do not fear them. Continue them, by all means, if the diversion consoles you. Only, I would advise you to consider this—had you killed me, a moment since, God alone can tell what would have been your fate; you would have been at the mercy of my devils below-stairs, and if once my hand were off them I do not like to consider how two dainty ladies would fare in their midst. Well, I see that since you look on me with such hatred I should waste words in telling you the tale of why I brought you hither, so I will leave you to get your rest. Good-night."

Turning on my heel, I left the room and swung the door shut behind me, and hardly had I crossed the gallery when I heard them forcing the rusty bolt into place.

TO BE CONTINUED

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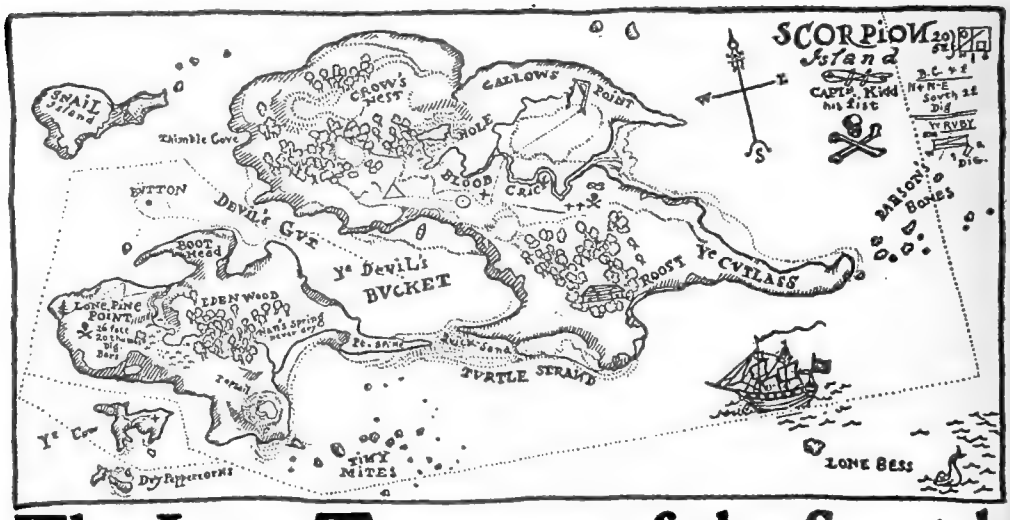

The Lost Treasures of the Spanish Main

Gold and Jewels Still Waiting to Be Found by Some Modern Adventurer

By **Buffington Phillips.**

BILLIONS of dollars' worth of treasure lie to-day where men of the past centuries have lost or buried it. History teems with accounts of sacks of cities, caches of the stolen treasure-troves concealed from invaders, millions hidden by pirates and buccaneers, wonderful mines of gold or silver found and then lost, and treasure-ships sunk in shallow waters.

Little of it has ever been recovered; the average man prefers to work for a few dollars a week.

But the history of the hundreds of treasures, some of them well known and rich in narrative, some of them but vaguely chronicled, is something of absorbing interest to the man with the true spirit of adventure in his blood. In this article and in others to be published later are presented the data carefully collected over a space of years from all parts of the world. The lost and buried treasures of the world are grouped and cited, their fascinating stories related, and all essential facts that might lead to their recovery are stated for the benefit of any one who cares to go hunting for the wealth that awaits but the finding.

More gold and silver was produced from the newly discovered Western Hemisphere by the early Spanish and Portuguese adventurers than the world had ever known in its history. The Spanish Main reeked with it. The Indians, from Mexico to Peru, had so much that they had no use for it. Shipload after shipload went to England, Spain and Portugal. Pirates and privateers raided the ports and the galleons. Governors often cached the treasures of a city to save them from the raiders; bishops and priests hid the wonderful solid gold altars, railings, vessels, and so forth, to keep them safe. Often the governor was slain or captured, perhaps removed, and in many cases the clerics suffered similar fates.

Hundreds of millions have been recovered, but the sums remaining unfound are so vast as to be staggering.

It is of those unrecovered or only partially recovered that I write, giving all the facts that I have been able to find, hoping to start the seekers on to the quests. Some of it seems so easily recoverable that one could go and almost lay one's hands on it; more of it would require patient effort, digging, draining, diving, searching; still other portions will be found only by the purest chance, as the clues are too vague.

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UNTOLD WEALTH SUNK IN A COLOMBIAN LAKE

THERE is one astounding store of gold the history of which is so clear and definite, and the obstacles to recovery so slight, that I will state its claims first.

On the Cundinamarca plateau in the Republic of Colombia is a little pond a quarter of a mile across. In the exact center of this pond superstitious Indians dumped gold in fiber bags in such quantities that on the bottom lie hundreds of million, perhaps several billion dollars' worth. One chief dropped in 9,600 pounds in one day to save the life of a sick daughter, and the votive process went on uninterruptedly for hundreds of years. It is easy to see how stupendous the treasure must be and how difficult to estimate accurately.

The bulk of the definite information concerning the lake comes from the journal of Fray Pedro Simon, a Jesuit missionary who dwelt among the Chibcha Indians near the lake for many years and witnessed the one incident cited; from the chronicles of Orviedo, the Spanish traveler and soldier; and less positive and more fragmentary reports of governors and caciques in the territory. The Colombian Government and Colombian historians have neglected to preserve anything but the tale of the little lake, for some reason failing to realize the value of the exact facts.

At the time of the conquest the lake was called Guatavita, "Caretaker of Life." The Indians believed that in the lakes and springs dwelt the sub-deities, and all the tribes in northern South America believed that in this wonderful little pool, with its clear cold springs and beautiful shores, dwelt the deity who had power to save and heal. Gold was to be found everywhere. Little mining was done, for the Indians could get more than they could use from the gravels and sands of the streams running down from the mountains. Its sole use was for decoration and religious or superstitious offerings.

Even to-day they still hide the secrets of the deposits, appearing in the towns with little leaf baskets the bottoms of which are covered with gold, which they use to buy all the print-cloths, arms, food and baubles that make up their simple needs; then they go away to their huts in the mountains. When the Spaniards first came the Indians laughed to find the white men so eager for what they deemed of so little value. But when they saw the white men killing and torturing their brothers, wives and children they grew silent and ever since have hidden all their knowledge of gold among themselves. An Indian who leads the way to an Indian mine signs his own death-warrant.

So common was gold that the headmen rose every day at dawn, bathed in some pool or stream, daubed themselves with vegetable gum and then sprinkled themselves from head to foot with gold-dust till they were perfectly gilded figures. Standing in rows with arms outstretched, they faced the rising sun, till his glory was irradiated by their bodies, then they plunged into the water, washed off the tens of thousands of dollars' worth of the precious stuff, and went back home, to return and repeat the performance the following morning.

FRAY PEDRO SIMON'S account of the lake says that it was one of a chain; that it was so small that two fiber ropes could be stretched across it, marking it into quarters. They crossed in the exact center. Rafts were moored onshore, and the Indians coming from afar laden with gold would heap it on these rafts in fiber and skin bags, use the ropes to guide the rafts to the center and then throw in the gold, an old and sacred man of the tribe or family reciting invocations to the spirit of the lake. Many, many marvelous tales were told of cures that had been effected in other days. Some of these cite ancestors ten generations before Fray Pedro Simon's time, showing how long gold had been poured into the pond.

What I have related has been common property among men interested in treasure-seeking, and parts of the facts have been printed both in America and England, but this is the first time that all the known facts have been given. There is to-day on the plateau a lake called Guatavita, *but it does not answer Fray Pedro Simon's description.*

Disregarding this in a typically British fashion, an English syndicate has been spending millions of dollars draining the larger and differently located body of water *now* called Lake Guatavita. To find the real lake, I should recommend that the journal of Fray Pedro Simon and the chronicles of Orviedo be taken, each little indicative word figured out deductively, and as he de-

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scribes the scenery from his chapel, and that scenery is not likely to have changed, the site of his chapel can be located, and then the location of the lake should be easy. A simple diving operation will probably do the remainder.

THE "SANTA MARTA'S" LOST $25,000,000

ON THE 15th of April, 1643, there set sail from what is now Colon the Spanish galleon *Santa Marta*, commanded by a master-at-arms called El Tigre de Joasco, and bearing vice-governor Hernando Arojas y Alençon, with a considerable company of wounded and fever-broken Spanish soldiers, a scattering of priests and some business travelers.

She was headed for Cadiz and Vigo. Her cargo was almost entirely gold. First there was a regular shipment to the Spanish Government, the exact value of which is known. To-day it figures to $18,420,500. Governor Arojas had been recalled in disgrace and was taking home his colonial loot, estimated at three million in gold bars. By the *Santa Marta* three bishops down the west coast of South America were sending to Rome seven great altar railings of solid gold and silver, with curved prayer steps, the goldsmithing having been done by priests in the three dioceses. These works are estimated at four million dollars, making the probable value of the cargo about $25,000,000 to-day, though much less valuable then.

It was not supposed that any one aboard knew the exact values or was aware that there was anything extraordinarily valuable aboard, except the master, Governor Arojas, and two priests of the ship's company. Some one organized a mutiny among the returning soldiers and sailors and, while the ship was heavily armed to defend herself against pirates or privateers, she was very easily taken over by her own crew some time during the first week out.

Two boatloads of prisoners were abandoned on the sandy shore of the *palisadoes* off the harbor of Kingston, Jamaica, but El Tigre de Joasco and Governor Arojas were not among them, and somewhere in the chinks of history their fate has slipped through and been lost. The best tale is that Arojas, believing he was going home to prison, perhaps to execution, chose to turn pirate when he learned of the great royal treasure aboard, on the well-known principle that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

The marooned people were very quickly picked up by small boats and landed in Kingston, and a Dutch privateer by the name of Warbington hurried in pursuit. The record of what transpired during the chase and the fight is not clear—is even too vague to be pertinent, but a month later Warbington sailed into what is now New York harbor and reported that he had fought the *Santa Marta* twice and been worsted, but had followed her to the Windward Passage, as it is now known, and north to the islands now bearing the name Fortune Islands, given them by reason of this very happening.

Here the crew cached the treasure, as they could not enter any important port and account for themselves and could not enter a small port and dispose of their hoard. It is positive that in these islands the cache was made, because when the *Santa Marta* reached Puerto el Principe shortly thereafter she was discharged. In the Fortune Islands was the only place she could have sent the treasure ashore.

The governor of Puerto el Principe was about to arrest the crew on suspicion of their having committed piracy, when they put to sea, and later the hulk, burned to the water's edge, was found near Cape Maysi. The men were never heard of, but, as they were quarreling and fighting among themselves in Puerto el Principe, it is logical to suppose that there was a second mutiny with much bloodshed, that the ship was fired and that those who did not jump into the sea were burned to death.

Two other galleons were robbed that same year by mutinous crews, but the treasures were safely landed by the mutineers, one crew at Lisbon and the other at Genoa. These must not be confused with the *Santa Marta* affair.

The Fortune Islands are quite small, are inhabited almost solely by Bahama blacks, are almost out of touch with the world, though but four days' sail from New York and one from Nassau or Havana. From the charts it may be seen that there is but one spot where the *Santa Marta* could have anchored to put ashore so heavy a cargo, and there ought to be little difficulty in locating the cache on the low-lying island. So far as I know, there has never been any attempt made at recovery.

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DRAKE, DE PONTIS, NUÑA SILVA AND CAPTAIN BOYNTON

THERE are many, many alluring sunken treasures on both coasts. Many of these are so familiar as to need but the merest mention.

Large sums and great effort have been expended to recover the millions in California gold of the old *Golden Gate*, definitely located on the Mexican coast.

Admiral Francis Drake's *Marigold* carried the bulk of his spoils up to the time of her loss on the west coast near Piedranegra.

In 1697 Admiral De Pontis, with a combined fleet of royal ships and colonial privateers, attacked, captured and sacked Cartagena and departed in two sections, the last ships being the treasure-bearers. They were intercepted by the English and one was blown up by a shot into her magazine and sank in the harbor; another went ashore near by; and a third was beached on Cisne Cay. To recover the treasure, location can be effected through a study of the British Admiralty records, and at least one of the three should lie in shallow water.

Drake captured a noted Portuguese pilot, Nuña Silva, whose memoirs assert that on the *Cacafuego* were 720,000 pounds sterling and much in silver, now depreciated, so that three million dollars would be about the sum. His narrative is the best guide to recovery of the gigantic chest that slipped back into the sea, for he was an eye-witness of the happening. According to his statement the extraordinary accident happened in a little harbor on the side of Caimo Island off the coast of Nicaragua.

Scores of persons have sought in vain for such an island and called poor old Nuña Silva some very hard names. On searching the records I find that, at the time he wrote, the coast of Costa Rica was called the coast of Nicaragua, and that the island he means is without doubt the island of Cano, and its only harbor is a small affair on the west side, charted to have shallow water and a hard bottom. Some one should recover that chest's contents with a few days' work with a diving-outfit.

The so-called Captain George B. Boynton, by all odds the greatest adventurer of modern times, whose reminiscences are now appearing in this magazine, would have made the records of Drake, Morgan and De Ruyter look pale and sickly had he lived in the good old days. Until his death in Brooklyn in January of this year at an advanced age, he carried the knowledge of a number of treasure-troves, the richest of which is an unnamed galleon in a Venezuela harbor. He had been waiting for politics there so to shape themselves that he could regain his former position and influence and have a chance to bring up a great sunken wealth which can be seen over the boat's side on a clear day, it is so near the surface.

MORGAN AND HIS TREASURE HOARDS

SOME of the great caches of which the history is encouragingly clear resulted from the activities of the great buccaneer, Sir Henry Morgan; and to the attention attracted to him and his deeds we of the present day owe the knowledge of details of treasures which he unwittingly caused to be buried. I will cite those not recovered, but recoverable.

The island of Tortuga, which lies just north of Santo Domingo, was the first stronghold of the buccaneers. English, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish adventurers who were making fortunes raising cattle in the Antilles, especially in the rich grassy plains of Santo Domingo, got into trouble with the authorities and were expelled by the colonial governors. The dried beef they made was called *boucan* and from this they took their name. Their occupation gone, they took to marauding. Crack shots, swordsmen, horsemen and sailors and extremely rough and hardy, they made a very dangerous force, especially under such leaders as "Peter the Great" and "Bartholomew the Exterminator," but their greatest leader was Morgan, who was later knighted by the King of England because the great pirate preferred Spanish treasure-ships and treasure-towns to less wealthy English possessions. A very great deal of treasure was brought during a long period to the island of Tortuga, and much of it was buried. A careful search of the island might reveal some rich troves.

In August, 1667, Morgan, having risen to leadership through dauntless courage and unheard-of cruelty and bloodthirstiness, led the buccaneers against Nuevitas, the new port of Puerto del Principe. The governor and leading citizens, hearing of his coming, hastily gathered the treasures of the city,

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estimated at several million dollars, and sent them inland a short distance on mule-trains in charge of a very few trusted men. The amount of public treasure and church treasure is not known, but the private treasure added totaled more than three million dollars. By fortifying a narrow pass they sought to defend the city, but Morgan flanked the defense and overwhelmed them.

In the fighting the men in control of the treasure situation were killed or dispersed, and the treasure was lost, every ounce of it, though I am of the opinion that it can be located to-day by this process: First, consult the Spanish archives for the names of the leading men involved; next consult the family archives of each of these, for it is incredible that every man who knew the secret of the location of the treasure could have perished. Some one or more preserved it.

ALMOST a repetition of this happening followed shortly after, when Morgan raided and captured Puerto Bello. The Government, the churches and the wealthy people placed their treasures in the hands of three designated men who hid them in the two forts that defended the town. All three men were killed, the forts were left heaps of ruins and the town gutted before Morgan discovered that he had cheated himself by his own destructiveness. Some small parts of the treasure were recovered, but the remainder lies under the two huge piles of masonry, now so covered with soil that even their sites are lost. To find them and then excavate, mostly with dynamite, all that is needed is to secure an early military map of the defenses. There are no figures on the amount in the ruins, but the city and churches were very, very wealthy.

Yet another occasion when Morgan's haste defeated his own ends was in the famous Panama expedition. He landed at the mouth of the Chagres River with four hundred men, and never in history have men been called upon for greater courage, stamina and ability to suffer hardship and fight great odds. Morgan held them together with a hand of iron and, after nine days of fighting through marshes without food, the little band reached the west coast to find that on the plains outside the city of Panama four thousand Spanish veterans were drawn up, supported by a large body of mounted colonists; and in the foreground was a huge herd of wild bulls, kept in check till the time was ripe to send them stampeding down on Morgan's men.

Morgan caught the situation at a glance and, acting with great vigor despite the weakened condition of himself and his men, he caused the bulls to charge the Spanish and, in the rout that followed, slaughtered the defenders without mercy. It is claimed that every buccaneer killed an average of five men that day.

As a safeguard the Panamanians had taken the vast treasures of the city and placed them aboard several vessels lying at anchor in the harbor, concealing many millions in gold and jewels between the ships' planking. Morgan ransacked the town and was so angry when he got almost nothing really valuable to reward his men for their unparalleled valor, that he sank the supposedly empty ships and, firing the town, marched back to his own vessels. None of the treasure was recoverable then, but a survey of the bottom of the harbor of the city of Panama will disclose the wrecks, and diving-apparatus should make recovery easy.

TREASURE HIDDEN IN MEXICO AND THE TORTUGAS

BEFORE leaving the subject of the buccaneers, another sunken treasure should be cited. In 1686 a Captain Phipps of the British navy learned of a sunken buccaneer vessel with a great treasure aboard on the shore or near the Tortugas and was sent by James II. of England to effect recovery. He found the treasure, removed only a part of it, and then sailed away, owing to the approach of two Spanish men-of-war. He was about to return, when the revolution of 1688 broke out and he was deterred. In the Admiralty archives are all details of this uncompleted task. What was easy for Captain Phipps should be still easier with modern methods.

For the past twenty years Mexican antiquarians have been expecting the announcement of the finding of a vast treasure in the State of Puebla. The third royal Spanish viceroy after Cortez succeeded in torturing from the chiefs of a tribe in Jalisco the secrets of the hiding-places of all of the tribal store of gold and silver, and by great efforts brought it to Tacuba, where it was concealed during a period when the suzerainty of New Spain was more or less uncertain. A dummy treasure-train was organized and

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started for Vera Cruz, and the word went forth that it carried the treasure. Some weeks later the real treasure-train of one hundred and eighty mules set out with only the usual small guard.

In some way the word got abroad, and the train was attacked by a mixed force of adventurers and Indians at a point within sight of the white tops of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. The defenders of the treasure succeeded in escaping with the loss of five mules and their burdens, but while passing through a gorge on the route of the old trail, now followed more or less closely by the Mexican Railroad, they decided it was best to cache the treasure.

A cave in the gorge was chosen and three hundred and twenty bags of gold and silver, containing several million dollars' worth, depending on how much more gold there was than silver, were stowed away, while the train proceeded to Orizaba. Some fifteen miles from the site of the present town the same band again attacked the train and killed nearly all the guard. Since the development of the region in which the cave must lie has begun, its discovery is only a matter of time, and it might be effected with comparative ease. There can not be many gorges, and caves are not frequent. The chances for finding the right one are rather strong. It has never been attempted.

THE MILLIONS OF COCOS ISLAND

NO SMALL spot on the face of the earth has been so productive of treasure-hunting adventure as Cocos Island off the coast of Costa Rica.

The west coast pirate Bonita before his death insisted that he had planted more than two million dollars in gold, silver, jewels and plate on the island, but his specific directions were lost by his ignorant executioners.

A party of Mexican political refugees, several of them of the famous Romero family or its connections, fleeing from the wrath of Santa Anna in 1848, planted under a stone arch on the island more than one million dollars, the revolutionary fund with which they expected to gain control of the Government. There is no stone arch left standing on the island, but more careful reading of the records leads me to believe that a small arch carved on a big natural stone indicates the place of the cache.

The third treasure is the greatest and most important. There is a little doubt as to whether it is located on Cocos or is in the Gallapagos group, off the coast of Peru. The traditions all say the latter place, but after a digest of all sources of information I am convinced that Cocos is the spot. The circumstances were as follows:

In 1855, only sixty-five years ago, the Chileans were pressing the Peruvians very hard, and when it looked as though Lima would be sacked by them the Government removed the national treasure to Callao and stored it in the strong forts there. After some weeks the commandant decided it was in such danger that he would place it under the protection of the American flag and engaged the captain of an American ship, the *Mary Deer*, lying in the harbor, to take it aboard. Eleven loads of the long-boat were required to transport it. The captain of the *Mary Deer* died very suddenly, perhaps of fever, perhaps of poison, and one day, while the mate was ashore the eleven sailors of the crew made sail and put to sea with such quickness and boldness that the forts could not stop the ship with their guns.

Vessels were sent in pursuit, and there ensued a long chase northward. She headed for the Gallapagos Islands, and then up the coast, hoping to reach Panama, but was intercepted and escaped to the Cocos Island shelter. Here the treasure was buried and, sneaking down the coast, the pirates meant to get near the Isthmus, fire the ship and make off to shore in the ship's boats, to assemble later and return for the treasure. A Peruvian warship picked them up, however, and all were captured.

One of the crew was a cabin-boy called Jackie Thompson, who had been very ill and had had no real part in the theft. He was released with two others who promised to guide the Peruvians to the treasure. The rest of the crew were executed aboard the Peruvian warship without trial. When the ship touched in Panama young Thompson was put ashore, and when the two men were proved liars in trying to pretend that the treasure was on Gallapagos they, too, were executed. This accounts for the tradition that the treasure is on Gallapagos. Thompson died some six years ago, after hiding his knowledge all his life, but he left papers, a map and notes which fell into the hands of a little group consisting of Admiral Palliser of the British Navy, Earl Fitzwilliam and Mrs.

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Roswell D. Hitchcock, a New York society woman.

Plans have been under way for some time to utilize this information, but nothing has been done. Over twenty previous expeditions have failed, and some years ago two rival parties, one from New York and one from Peru, met on Cocos and had a little war in which both were nearly wiped out. The amount of the Peruvian national treasure has been variously stated. The lowest amount given is $7,000,000, the highest $65,000,000.

FIVE OTHER WAITING TREASURES

THE treasure on Trinidad, far out in the South Atlantic off the Brazilian coast, is often confused with the Cocos treasure, owing to peculiar circumstances which are not altogether explainable. Treasures are handled secretly, great thefts of them occur in highly disturbed conditions, caches are made in out-of-the-way places and subsequent information is usually in scraps and bits which, if they fall into the hands of careless or imaginative writers, are set down later in a very misleading form. There are seven distinct accounts of the Trinidad treasure, and which of these is to be credited I can not say.

The points on which all agree are that the bulk of it is a wonderful sacred gold service made in Peru and a set of solid gold altar railings and appurtenances shipped secretly to Spain at the time of the first Peruvian revolution, when the church was being despoiled of its vast wealth. It is certain that, whatever the name of the ship conveying it, she rounded the Horn, put into Trinidad, buried the treasure and then proceeded. By one account she turned slaver; by another she was sunk on the African coast; by another she was captured by a ship belonging to the leaders of the general South American revolutionary movement. The publication of these facts may bring to light other information.

Among the smaller treasures of which there is record it is well to mention the seven large cannon filled with gold-pieces by the pirate Villazon and buried on an island at the very southernmost part of the Bay of Campeachy; the reported cache on the top of the eminence immediately north of the city of Santiago de Cuba, to be reached only by a difficult trail starting in near Dos Caminos; the mysterious and probably non-existent Havana municipal treasure, said to have been assembled at the time of the English attack and concealed within the ramparts of Morro Castle so effectually that it was never found again.

In conclusion there should be related the fascinating tale of the great Minas de Ladrones treasure, in the State of Sonora, Mexico, somewhere within mule-pack distance of the port of Guaymas. Of its history little is generally known, but the complete data were collected by the late Colonel Julius G. Tucker. He was a colonel when only a mere boy on the staff of General Forrest during the Civil War, and afterward went to Brownsville, Texas, where for twenty years he was a king of the border.

In that period he received the barefooted, ragged refugee, Porfirio Diaz, at his ranch and gave him the twenty thousand silver dollars with which Diaz set out again to make himself president. Tucker spent much time in Mexico, engaged in important confidential work, until he was appointed United States Consul General to the French West Indies. He heard of the Minas de Ladrones cache and began systematically to run down the facts.

A half-Spanish, half-Dutch adventurer, whose name has been lost, only his sobriquet of the "Great Thief" remaining, deserted from a force en route to California from Coahuila in 1724 and became a bandit leading a body of men recruited from young Yaquis and half-breed outcasts. From the Indians he learned of the mine in question and abandoned robbery of travelers to produce gold surreptitiously, as the viceroys of that time took the lion's share for the crown and themselves if a good mine was located. At first the gold was smuggled out on mules to Guaymas and then viceregal spies began to try to trace the source. Laying in abundant provisions and ceasing to export his product, the bandit chief continued to work the wonderfully rich find for many years, storing his gold in the mine shaft. If he produced at the rate he exported, he must have stored fifteen or twenty million dollars.

At last he determined to take his gold to the coast and sail for Holland, and chartered a ship for the purpose. Everything was in readiness when some of the former members of his band, whom he had been pensioning, raided the vessel, thinking he and the gold were already aboard, and burned it when

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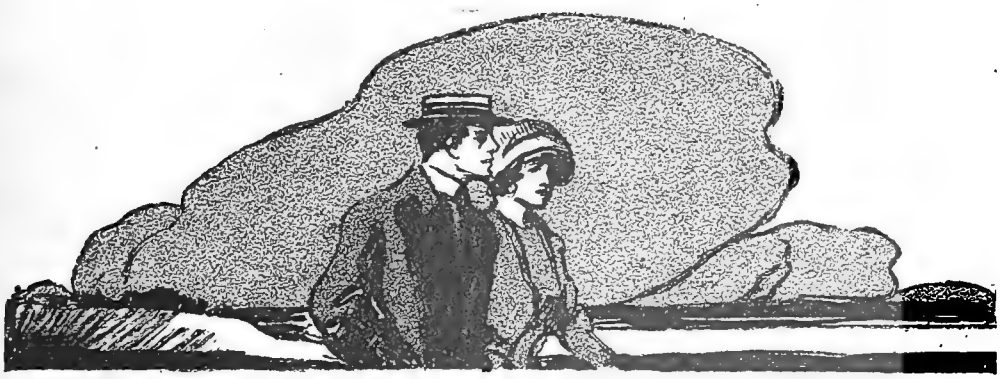
they found they were mistaken. The ex-chief of the bandits sealed up the mine's mouth and left the country.

Such a mine would figure in no way on the official records, but Colonel Tucker heard of it from two of the bandits whom Diaz organized into the present rural police system. He had unearthed the whole story when he came to New York in 1905 and lived at the Parkview Hotel in Forty-second Street. In the Fall he sailed for Hamburg, having learned that the descendants of the adventurer had the records of the location of the mine. Shortly after visiting Holland and wiring that he had obtained the records, he was taken sick and died on October 14th.

It is doubtful whether the person or persons into whose hands his papers fell realized that they represented about $20,000,000, but, wherever those papers are to-day, they contain the key to the great lost treasure of the Minas de Ladrones.



HAVING A MAN

By NORVELL and HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

AT FIVE-THIRTY precisely Ellen Sample came down in the elevator of the great Transoceanic Building with the only man she knew in New York. Jammed into the corner near the door, he bowed to her cheerily; and she bowed back a little stiffly, unaware that he had been waiting seven floors to catch her eye. Four times they had met thus in the elevator, and once—the day before yesterday—her kindly employer had introduced them, when the youth chanced to come into the office, so she knew that his name was Daniel Waller, Jr. From his dress he might have been a crown prince, but by reason of his cheery candor with a friend one day, she knew, in common with the elevatorful, that somewhere in the vast pile his services were evaluated at $12.50 per week.

Summer clasped the city in a crucifying embrace, and little stenographers turned pale and wilted under your eye, while their own eyes grew about four sizes larger, with black rings underneath. Miss Sample was twenty-one, slim, shy, capable for all her ethereal face, and (from about 3 P. M.) very tired. Orphaned and driven to work in the city, she carried down-town, for defense, an inborn horror of the easy social familiarities of commerce; perhaps she had stood up so straight in this regard that she leaned the least bit backward. And she was very lonely, and about the best fun she had all day was going to bed at night.

The lift stopped with a small jerk. Behind her in the teeming corridor she heard a voice speaking her name.

"I hope you had breezes up aloft to-day, Miss Sample. Down in our section it was like the Black Hole. Awful sight to see men trampling their own fathers for first chance at a snatch of air, isn't it?"

She turned and saw at her elbow cheerful young Mr. Waller.

"Going up-town?" he ran on at once. "Might I go along with you? I'm out early to-day, with not one blessed thing to do."

"Why," said Ellen Sample, instinctively

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doubtful and hesitating—"why, yes—if you wish to. I go only as far as Eighteenth Street."

Daniel Waller, Jr., appeared not to notice her hesitation. Chatting at his ease, he steered her away from the roaring inferno of the subway and seated her in an open surface car. There, at her side, he proceeded to make himself a most acceptable companion, gay, impersonal, kind. Gradually Ellen Sample was lured from behind the hedge of her maiden reserve, and before long, quite unconsciously, was letting him lead her on to talk about her troubles.

"The minute I get to be President or Chief Justice or something," said Mr. Waller, "I'm going to shoot through a law making it a penitentiary matter to work in the dog-days. Everybody'll have a holiday from June first to September fifteenth under Waller's law."

"Oh!" said she, with a sudden touch of wistfulness. "Do you think holidays are so very nice, then?"

"Mad about 'em. Aren't you?"

"Well—no; no, I can't say I am. But of course I suppose that's only because of the way I have to take mine."

"And what way is that?"

"Well—you see I take them at Blue Creek Inn, and I——"

"Blue Creek Inn! Near the Samoset, isn't it? I say, you are a swell, though!"

Ellen Sample gave a little laugh that hadn't a great deal of merriment in it.

"My aunt runs it, you see. And takes me in free every Summer, and also acts as my chaperon. I'm going next Wednesday for two weeks. I know I ought to be grateful, and I am when I'm sensible. Only——"

She became silent, and he prompted her with: "But why don't you like it up there? I'd always understood that it was quite a jolly little haven."

"Oh—because!"

"Your explanation, while clever, is not as yet convincing, Miss Sample."

"Because," laughed Ellen, rather ruefully, "I'm *snubbed so!* Oh, you can't blame them in the least. Most of the people at Blue Creek are quite fashionable, you see, and think a good deal about getting in with the Samoset crowd, and of course they couldn't be much interested in—stenographers. And then, besides, you see, I can't play bridge or golf or tennis—working girls don't have the chance to learn those things, and we were always poor. So it's perfectly natural that I should be passed over. I know this all sounds dreadfully silly to you," she ended, rather timidly.

But Daniel Waller, Jr., said no, not at all, and please to go on.

"Well—that's all. Except that—well, two weeks up there does have quite a depressing effect on you, of course. It—it leaves you so dissatisfied with yourself, and I think that is what unhappiness is, don't you—being dissatisfied with yourself?"

He had always thought just that, it seemed.

"Isn't there anybody at all up there," he inquired sympathetically, "for you to go around with?"

"Yes—no, there isn't," said Ellen Sample, "not this Summer. Before this there's been Agatha—she's my cousin, but I'm not sure she'll be there this year. And besides she's got—a little out of my class."

"How in the world did she do that?"

"Well, you see, she got engaged to a Yale professor."

"I'm only a stupid man," said Mr. Waller, "and I don't seem to make the connection."

She made it for him, with a splendid simplicity. Agatha, it seemed, was a dear girl, but she was not considered exactly pretty, but only fresh-looking. She wore glasses, and knew a great deal about rock formations and equilateral triangles and why Rome fell. Seven Summers she stayed at her mother's inn, and none of the girls there but Ellen seemed to know she was alive. Then last Summer the young professor staying at one of the cottages began walking over to see her, and in a night Agatha became a figure of consequence at Blue Creek. The professorial attentions gave her the prestige she had hitherto lacked in the little world; the fashionable girls took note of her for the first time, and discovered that she was nice; and before long they were including her in their trivial round.

"Why, even before I left," concluded Ellen, "nearly *all* of them were calling her Agatha!"

"That is really very interesting. I'd no idea girls were like that," said Mr. Waller. "And doesn't anybody up there call you—by your name?"

"No, but I wish they would, though," said Ellen earnestly. "People like to have friends, don't you think so?"

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THE car bowled along, making a gratifying noise. By chance they had the broad seat to themselves. The people before and behind them were properly engrossed in their own pursuits. Daniel Waller, Jr., having satisfied himself on this point, casually observed:

"Well, do you know, as far as I can see, it was merely having a man that boosted your cousin Agatha into the smart set."

"Oh, yes, that was it," said Ellen seriously. "The girls at Blue Creek think a great deal about men—at least, whenever I have overheard them talking that is what they have been talking about. It's perfectly natural; you see it makes such a difference in your good time—having a man."

"Then it seems to follow logically," said Mr. Waller, rather absently, as he gazed off into space, "that if you had a man, you, too, would be admitted to the sacred circle."

"Oh, yes, I think so. But that can't be, you see, for I don't know any men," said Ellen Sample.

Daniel Waller looked down at her—there was not the smallest trace of consciousness or coquetry in her pale, serious face. The young man pinched himself; but after that he seemed uncertain how to proceed. Suddenly he broke into a fit of laughter.

"Excuse me!" he said, pulling himself together. "But I just got the funniest—and the *dandiest*—idea ever!"

"Please hurry up and tell me," said Ellen, laughing too.

"It's just this, Miss Sample," said he, slapping his leg. "Take *me* on as your man for Blue Creek! How's that for a clever scheme!"

A rush of pink came into her face; she seemed to edge away from him on the bench. "I'm very sorry you said that," she said stiffly, "and sorry I——"

"Miss Sample, Miss Sample!" interrupted Mr. Waller good-humoredly, but with some color in his own cheek, "you misunderstand completely! You and I are nearly strangers—aren't we? You oblige me to say that I can have no interest personally in—in the matter."

"Then why did you——"

"Why, because it's such a natural, *obvious* solution of the difficulty. It's such plain business sense! You're Demand—I'm Supply; that's all there is to it. Believe me, I meant the suggestion only in kindness."

"I—I spoke hastily," said Ellen, a note of apology in her voice, "but I don't in the least understand what you mean."

"Why," said Mr. Waller, "if you needed, say, a new dress to make your holiday a great success, you'd simply go and get one, wouldn't you? It's exactly the same thing, I simply offered myself as the particular—ah—commodity you happen to require to make those little ninnies up there understand that you were—well, worth noticing."

"But," said she, bewildered, "of course you couldn't come up to Blue Creek, and so I don't see——"

"Don't you? Why, it isn't necessary for a man to be on the premises for people to know you've got one, Miss Sample! As far as that goes, I could stay right here and go through the motions of a heavy rush—letters, telegrams, an occasional present, and so forth. In a little place like Blue Creek, gossip and rumor and all that would soon do the work—oh, don't you see? Why, it would be Agatha's case right over again!"

Ellen was gazing at him with intense absorption. Her eyes were of blue-spar, large, fringed and singularly innocent. Daniel Waller, Jr., looked down into them.

"Well," he said, a little abashed, "don't you think it would work?"

"Oh, yes—now that I see what you mean—I'm sure it would—have a splendid effect," said she with the ghost of a sigh. "But of course I could not let you do such a thing for me."

"Oh, couldn't you? Well, you know, Miss Sample, it seems to me that we fellow-workers ought to stand together in matters like these—sort of a union, you know. And then there was another thing—oh, yes. All my life it's been a perfect passion with me to try to put down snobs—I'd rather do it," said Mr. Waller, "than eat."

"But the expense!" said Ellen. "Oh, no!"

Daniel Waller had the air of a man who was doing some tall thinking.

"Oh, yes, the expense! Yes, yes! Well, of course," he said with an embarrassed laugh, "I supposed you would be willing to stand the expense."

Now Ellen's gaze became fascinated. Upon her candid face he saw the idea sinking into her consciousness and taking firm hold; but she made no reply.

"Maybe," he said reluctantly, "it would not be worth the money to you to boost your time at Blue Creek."

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"*Worth* it! It would be worth everything to me, through all next Winter—the finest *investment!* I have $140 in bank," she said a little proudly to the young Twelve-fiftyer, "and I feel it would be worth it all to me to have *one good time!*"

He said kindly: "Then why not let's do it?"

"It would mean a good deal of bother for you," she said, coloring anew. "If—if we arranged to do this, of course you would have to—let me give you something for your trouble."

Daniel Waller turned away and looked off at the city's passing sights.

"Well," he said presently, "I can't deny that it would take a good bit of time. I meant the offer complimentary, but I don't get much salary at Humperdink &—where I work, and if you want to give me three a week for my trouble, all right."

"Let's say five," said Ellen generously.

"No," said Daniel Waller, justly—"no, three's the fair pay. The letters are the only thing that would give much trouble, and—er—the fact is, I—I think I know a book I could get them out of, which will save making them up."

Ellen's face was immensely serious and interested. "Well, now—please tell me just what we are to do," said she.

II

"IF A MAN appeared suddenly in this dove-cote," said Miss Carruthers, who was sentimental, "I don't believe anybody here would *know what he was*."

"*I* would," said Miss Vanstittart, who was quite strong-minded.

All have heard talk of "our feminized institutions." Blue Creek Inn, indeed, was one of them, and the big living-room of a Summer's evening showed it. Five smartly dressed ladies sat reading or talking about the massive center-table with the blue-shaded electric lamps. Four smartly dressed girls sat at a smaller table, playing bridge. One smartly dressed girl sat two steps away from them, polishing her finger-nails with a pocket-handkerchief. Not far from her sat a sixth girl, becomingly but not so smartly dressed, reading a magazine.

The hour was 8 P. M. To the girl dressed only becomingly dashed a bell-boy, who said n the hearing of several: "Long-distance all for you, miss!"

"Oh—for me!" said Ellen Sample, looking up rather startled, a very pretty color in her cheek. "Who is it, do you know?"

"Mr. Waller I think was the name, miss—in New York."

"Oh!" said Ellen.

She got up and hurried away, followed, as she was very well aware, by the glances of ten smartly dressed women. She had no sooner disappeared than Miss Pyne, at the bridge-table, said to Miss Carruthers:

"Who was it calling her, Clara, did you hear? Double a spade."

"Mr. Waller—from New York."

"Waller? Lead, Grace. I wonder what Waller that is."

"The one," said Miss Carruthers, risking a guess as she turned to the table, "who's sent her two telegrams and a box of Beauties since noon. Who's winning here?"

"Do keep your attention on the game, dear. Don't forget the special delivery at lunch-time, Clara. I was at the table when it came."

It seemed that the aunt had been doing a little judicious talking that day.

"I hear he's a wealthy clubman," said Miss Carruthers, "and his father was investigated or something last year. Most any kind of a man would be a lark in this tomb."

"Why on earth you did that, Grace—when I echoed on your ace of diamonds and everything! *Dear!* She's rather a good-looking little thing," said Miss Vanstittart—*the* Miss Vanstittart—"though I'm not sure that I'd ever pick her out of a crowd."

MEANTIME, Ellen, shut up in the little booth, was having a conversation which might have surprised the gossips around the bridge-table.

"That you, Miss Sample? This is Daniel Waller, Jr."

Ellen laughed. His voice sounded so friendly and nice, and she did feel so grateful to him for all that he had done for her that day.

"I believe it's you, Mr. Waller, I have to thank for several very pleasant surprises today!"

"Don't mention it, I beg. We strive to please," laughed Mr. Waller. "How do things seem to be going?"

Ellen thought that she detected a subtle change, a faint, far something, in the social atmosphere already.

"Why, certainly!" his confident voice re-

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plied. "We know we've got the right recipe —success absolutely guaranteed. Remember Agatha! You got the telegrams and the —letter?"

"Yes—oh, yes!" said Ellen Sample, a shade uncertainly.

"I thought we ought to start off with something of a bang," said he. "But perhaps I ought to explain about the—the language in which my missives were couched, you know. You see, I want you to be able to open them when people are around—just to make all look natural—and—er—the truth of the matter is, Miss Sample, you never can tell when people are going to peek over your shoulder in this world. Therefore, while I fill the inside with any old thing —stuff copied out of the encyclopedia—I'm obliged to make the *outside* pages, and the telegrams, look like the real thing. You understand——"

"Oh, that's all right," Ellen said heartily into the receiver. "You see, I don't need to read them anyhow."

"No," said Mr. Waller, after a brief pause. "No; no, you don't—that's so. I just thought I'd explain——"

"And oh, Mr. Waller! You're keeping a *strict* account of all you spend, aren't you? For my bill, you know?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! Every penny goes right down in a little black book in my inside pocket. Oh, trust me for that!"

"Those *gorgeous* roses must have been terribly expensive, weren't they? Not that I mind—never! And oh, I do love them so!"

"Oh, those roses!" said Mr. Waller, and gave a little laugh. "I meant to tell you about those roses—it's rather interesting. Now those roses look almost exactly like American Beauties, don't you think so? Well, you see, the joke of it is—they're not! No, not at all. They're a special kind that I know about from a little man on Twenty-eighth Street who's just starting in the business—at one-third the price. That's clever, isn't it? And then take this long-distance call—it isn't costing you a cent. I know a man who has a frank, and I make him let me use it whenever I like."

Ellen, laughing, complimented him on his economical finesse as a provider.

"Thank you, Miss Sample! Now, as we've got the use of this frank," his pleasant voice went on, "I think it would be wise for me to call up every evening, just to see how things are going—and to get any instructions. And oh, yes—here's another point. If it seemed that it would help matters along to have me put in a bodily appearance—say to run up over Sunday—I think it could be managed inexpensively—most inexpensively. In fact I feel sure I could get a pass from a—a relative of mine."

"That's very, very good of you," said Miss Sample gratefully. "But of course I wouldn't *think* of troubling you to do that!"

She left the telephone in rather a thoughtful mood, and proceeded to do a rather noteworthy thing. Instead of returning to the parlor, she went to her own little room under the eaves, snapped on the light, took two telegrams and a letter from her top bureau drawer and sat down in a hard little chair. Then, after deliberately calling up before her mind's eye the physical presence of her agent, Mr. Waller, she proceeded to read:

Midnight. I can't sleep for thinking of you. God keep you safe this night! D. W., JR.

New York is empty since yesterday. It's only ten hours since we parted, but it seems ten lifetimes. DAN.

And then the letter:

DEAR HEART: I wonder if you quite understand how alone and utterly bereaved in the world I am without you! And yet, through all, I'm glad that you are there, since God knows you need the rest. And this separation, bad as it is, is yet driving deep into me a lesson which I want to learn to the very utmost. I mean the knowledge of my need of you, a need today as boundless as the ocean, which yet, when you are near, can shrink to just Five Feet Three. Through all my dreams by day and night, the beauty of your face is the lamp to my poor feet. And now —that we are over the page, Miss Sample, and safe from prying eyes, I need not continue in this strain, but will fall back upon the trusted encyclopedia. BOSNIA (properly Bosna) is the extreme N. W. province or vilayet of European Turkey, comprising Bosnia proper, Herzegovina——

Ellen Sample let Mr. Waller's letter fall upon her lap, and stared at the farther wall.

"I wonder," she mused presently, "if he got that out of the book, and how the rest of it goes."

NEXT day at noon, Ellen sat upon the pretty, awninged piazza, Miss Carruthers and Miss Milbanke being quite near at hand. Miss Carruthers was polishing her finger-nails, Miss Milbanke was polishing a golf-club, and Ellen Sample was polishing up a remark which she in-

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tended to make pretty soon. Desultory conversation was going on among the three. Miss Carruthers, gratifyingly, had asked Ellen several kind questions, and was now gradually leading around to her favorite subject, *viz.*: men in New York.

"Going to take in the bridge to-night, Clara?" asked Miss Milbanke, who affected the bluff and hearty.

"Oh, I suppose so! How we eat, sleep and drink that game here!"

"Hear there's a gold crop for the prize. Me for it!" said Miss Milbanke.

"H'm. I hoped it was silk stockings," said Miss Carruthers gloomily. "You don't play bridge, do you, Miss Sample?"

"No," said Ellen earnestly, "but I'd like very much to learn."

"*Ex*-press for you, Miss Sample!" cried Mr. Johns, the energetic clerk, charging up with a package.

"Oh!" said Ellen, surprised and a little flustered. "I wonder what it can be?"

"Looks to me," said bluff Miss Milbanke, "like a good old box of five-pounds."

Such, indeed, it proved to be—a five-pounds so delicious that the Blue Creek mouth watered at the first glance at the glorious top layer. Ellen handed it around, her cheek like the cheek of a sun-kissed peach. Miss Carruthers made an arch insinuative remark. Miss Milbanke proceeded to demonstrate that she was hearty in more than one meaning of the word.

To the three, as they sat in something like a friendly trio, came Miss Vanstittart, fresh from a tennis game; and being offered a chance at Ellen's candy (bought for her account by Daniel Waller, Jr., at a cost of $5, exclusive of expressage), graciously accepted. Yes, the great Vanstittart, known to be a second cousin of the Ganaudets, actually stood there munching a nougat donated by Ellen Sample, the little stenographer. Oh, these were fine times!

"Did you leave it very hot in the city, Miss Sample?" distinctly inquired the Vanstittart. "We've been sleeping under blankets up here."

"Who do you think came to the Samoset last night, Helen?" demanded Miss Carruthers. "Ted Swinton!"

"By George!" said Miss Milbanke heartily, "this candy is all to the good!"

"Do have some more," urged Ellen Sample.

When the luncheon-gong rang, Ellen rose with the others, and went up-stairs in a fine flush of triumph. Undoubtedly she was climbing fast. Behind her on the piazza floor lay the little card which had fallen unheeded from the box of five-pounds. Miss Vanstittart picked it up. On the back was a very tender inscription, which Miss Vanstittart read—quite by accident. On the front was neatly engraved: Mr. DANIEL WALLER, JR., and when Miss Vanstittart noted this she said in large capitals:

"GIRLS! Will you please look here!"

Miss Sample, descending from her room ten minutes later, met the queen of Blue Creek at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh, Miss Sample," said the queen casually, "aren't you going to play in the bridge to-night?"

"Why, that's *awfully* kind of you, Miss Vanstittart!" said Ellen, a world of love and gratitude in her heart, "but, you see, I don't know how to play."

Miss Vanstittart incredibly replied: "If you have nothing better to do this afternoon *I* should be very glad to teach you."

"You can't learn to play bridge in an afternoon," said bluff Miss Milbanke, who was standing near.

"*I* did," cried Miss Vanstittart, squelching her.

The epoch-making *rapprochement* with *the* Vanstittart took place on Thursday. Ellen played in the tournament that night, very badly. Next day there was a walking-party and picnic to Hanging Rock—the Blue Creek one, Hanging Rock No. 784—and she was invited. On Saturday night there was the weekly hop at the Samoset, and Ellen went to that, too, as the guest of Mrs. and Miss Milbanke, while Miss Carruthers introduced Ted Swinton, who introduced Mr. Marstetter and Mr. James. It was a most delightful occasion. As has been cleverly said by another, nothing succeeds like doing so. Ellen had never looked so pretty, never been so attractive, never had such a good time in her life.

Beyond the understanding of the little working-girl, the box of five-pounds seemed definitely to have clinched her dream of establishing *ententes cordiales* with the young ladies of Blue Creek. It hardly needed the further attentions of reliable Mr. Waller, which he continued to pour in lavishly by every train and mail, to keep her in the notice of Inn society. In whatever was afoot these days, she found herself, with unceasing

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gratitude, included, just as her yearning fancy had aspired. Within three days the great queen herself had called her Ellen—how sweet the plain name sounded on the royal lips!—while delicately intimating a wish to know whether her man in New York was going to "come up!"

YET Ellen, strange to tell, was not happy. No, the more glorious grew the days, the more unhappy she became. On Wednesday afternoon she lay on her bed in the little room under the eaves, reading over all her letters and telegrams from Daniel Waller, Jr., having rejected all invitations for the afternoon for that express purpose. She seemed to derive small comfort from the procedure; and the refrain most constantly in her thoughts was this:

"Oh! How he must *despise* me!"

The truth was that her purchased affair with Mr. Waller, at first so clever and interesting, had strangely become like a stinging nettle in her mind. Most stinging, most dreaded while most looked forward to, had become the nightly telephone talks, when the young man's cheerful inconsequences of speech contrasted so oddly, so arrestingly, with the flaming ardor of his written word. These written words, which she had hinted that she didn't mean to read at all, Ellen was coming to know by heart. And never did she glance at one of the throbbing messages without instantly seeing its author's pleasant face and hearing his cool voice say that of course he had not the least interest in her personally. And it did no good to remind herself that he was only her paid agent at three dollars a week, for she had tried that steadily for three days.

There was one of the letters that Ellen had liked especially; she knew it perfectly by the envelope; and now she plucked it out sadly from the stack beside her and read the "outside" anew:

All day I've been thinking of the time I first saw you—standing in the elevator at the end of the hot day, so little and tired, so unaware of all the charm and sweetness that seemed to breathe from you, never dreaming that your little *lady's* face was like heaven to look at after all the second-rate ones men had seen that day. I'd always mocked at love at first sight; but I swear that when I looked at you that day, I knew how it was with me—just a look of the eye, and all was settled and happy! But oh, little lady! how cold you were at first! How hard it was to win a smile from your reserve, till I thought —The sons of the Titan god Iapetus, as described in the Hesiodic theogony, are Atlas, Menœtius, Prometheus and Epimetheus. Of these, Atlas alone is mentioned by Homer, and even he——

Never a single personal word beyond what the contract absolutely called for. What would the girls say if they knew! Ellen buried her face in the pillow.

"I'm a little cheat!" she moaned. "It serves me right—playing with sacred things——"

III

LATE in the sad afternoon she slept a little, and awoke with a new, clean resolve—a bitter resolve, but one which would at least make everything honest again. She rose, refreshed; dressed with care, removing all signs of wo from her face and went down-stairs.

On the Blue Creek porch, surrounded by a cooing cluster of girls, stood Daniel Waller, Jr!

At Ellen's approach the girls turned, with such arch, knowing looks, and called out a jumble of unintelligible things which she did not even hear, for the group had broken and Mr. Waller was coming straight toward her, with outstretched hand, and just the right business look in his honest eye.

"How do you do, Ellen?" said he.

And little Ellen, not one to allow her hand to be forced, beat down the sudden tumult in her breast, and heard her own voice saying as from a distance:

"Why—Dan! What a nice surprise!"

Daniel Waller, Jr., seemed to possess a certain competency at handling little emergencies of this sort. There was no awkwardness, nothing unseemly; yet in the wink of an eye he and Ellen were walking together over the lawn toward the little Summer-house, while seven deserted young ladies gazed after them from the piazza.

Safe in the Summer-house, Mr. Waller took up the conversation again.

"Don't look so blue about it, Miss Sample!" he said teasingly. "This visit isn't costing us a cent."

Ellen sat down on the hard bench and fought desperately against an impulse to burst into tears.

"A man brought me up in his private car —no charge," continued Mr. Waller. "I can't say that you look overjoyed to see me."

"Yes—I am very glad you came," said

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Ellen, recapturing her poise and managing a fairly plausible smile. "Do you know I was going to tell you to-night that I wished our—arrangement to come to an end? I find I have become very tired of it," said Ellen Sample.

A curious look passed over Mr. Waller's face; he sat down on the bench beside her.

"Of course I don't mean," added Miss Sample in a just voice, "that you shall suffer for it. Our arrangement was for the two full weeks, and I want you to put your—your salary in the bill accordingly."

"Oh," said Mr. Waller, "thank you. Thank you very much."

There was a brief silence.

"So I'm fired," said he meditatively, "and the little game is over?"

"Yes," said Ellen, preparing to rise. "And now, if you will excuse me, I think I will go back to the house. I am going to tell the girls all about the little game, confess it all, and to-morrow I'm going back to New York!"

He turned to her aghast. "*What!* Tell Helen Vanstittart—and those *harpies!* You mustn't do anything of the sort!" he said sternly. "It would ruin everything. And besides—my father's at the Samoset, and I was going to entice him over here to-night to see you. I—why, I was counting on that as the best card we'd played yet——"

"Your father?" she echoed vaguely, bewildered.

"Humperdink & Waller—it was his car I came up in. Why, Miss Sample——"

"Your father has a private car?" said Ellen in a queer little voice. "I thought you worked for $12.50 a week!"

Mr. Waller turned scarlet. "Well—that is all he says I'm worth on the pay-roll," he explained weakly, "but of course he does the right thing on the side. He's—well, he's pretty well fixed," he added imploringly, "but that doesn't make any difference, does it?"

At this shameful confession Ellen sprang to her feet, white and trembling.

"So you're a cheat, too—just like me! Oh, *me!*" she said wildly, "oh, how did you dare make fun of me this way!"

"Fun?"

She would have dashed from the Summer-house, but he, too quick for her, resolutely blocked her way.

"Please wait," he said, in a voice unlike his own. "You fired me—I give you that. But the fact is that I came up here with my written resignation in my pocket——"

"Let go of my wrist!" cried she, stamping a little high-heeled shoe. "I don't care what you——"

"You *must* read it to be business-like," said he, as though being business-like were the one thing in all the world that mattered to him. "Come, Miss Sample! There's not a business woman in New York who would discharge her agent without at least taking a glance at his resignation!"

He thrust a sealed letter into her hand, and Ellen, seeing no other hope of escape, broke it open and saw in the familiar hand:

DEAR ELLEN SAMPLE:

It's no go. Playing at making love to you is altogether too much for a man who was in the beginning harder hit than he knew.

The little game is over, Ellen Sample, and unless you will let me go on in earnest now, all this world is an empty waste for DAN.

"You told me you weren't going to read my letters," she heard his changed voice saying, just above her, "but did you happen to glance at one I wrote about the—the first time I ever saw you?"

Little Ellen was in great straits now. The tall young man stood like a rock in front of her, and she could think of nothing in all the world to do with her eyes. Desperately she plucked at her flagging spirit.

"Really you—you must let me return to the house now. Oh, how can you expect me to remember, with all the make-believe you wrote——"

"That letter," he said, "was the true story."

But Ellen stood for the whole truth now, hating all games forevermore:

"Oh! How can you!—when you told me—yourself—that you had no p-personal interest in——"

"No, I told you that you obliged me to say that I had no personal interest in you. Darling," said Daniel, taking her firmly into his arms, "don't you know that a good business man is frequently obliged to say things that are just the reverse of the truth?"

"You owe me," he said, five minutes later, little black book in hand, "$26.80. I am now going to explain to you how, without the expenditure of any cash, and without trouble or labor on your part, you can repay me in full."

"Oh, how?" asked Ellen, earnestly. "Oh-h-h, *Dan!*"

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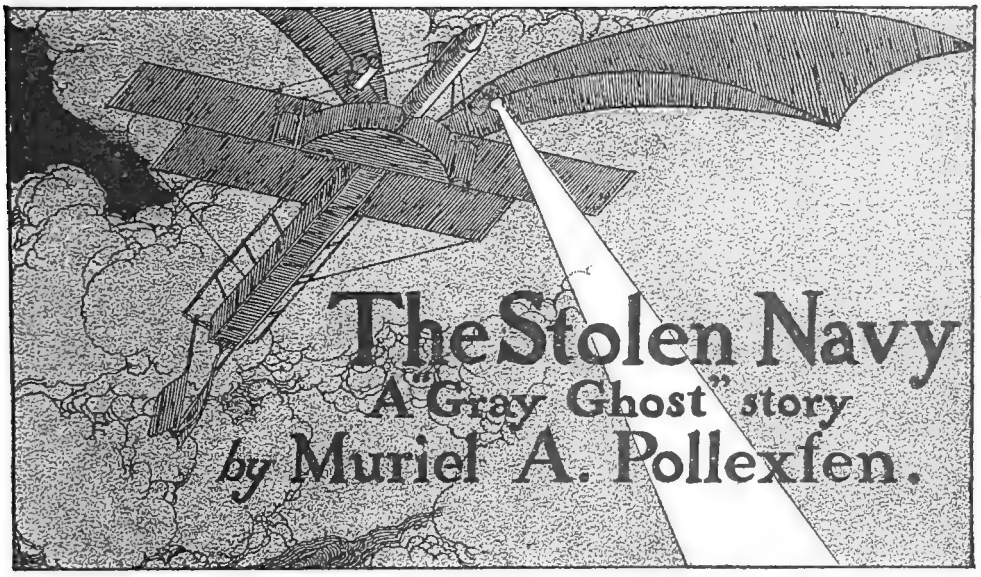

The Stolen Navy

A "Gray Ghost" story

by Muriel A. Pollexfen.

SIR DEAN DENSHAM was alone in his study, and, because he was alone, had permitted some of the perturbation of his mind to become apparent in his usually expressionless face and to drain the color from his little beady eyes. The desk before him was littered with documents, and a pile of cipher telegrams was heaped beneath his restless fingers. At almost regular intervals the muffled whirr of the telephone bell called his attention, and with every message his face grew grayer and grayer and the anxiety in his eyes more discernible.

At the end of an hour that had passed as slowly as a lifetime the door opened noiselessly and a secretary crossed the floor with a telegram. He laid it without comment on the desk and, receiving no order, went from the room as silently as he had entered it.

It was fully two minutes before Sir Dean pulled himself together and slit the buff envelope, and it was with a palpable effort that he forced himself to read the words:

> Still no news of battleship *Edward VII*. Have sent *Euripides* and *Plassy* to search for her. *Leviathan* not reported yet, but no need for alarm at present.
>
> Slight fog in Channel which has probably delayed her.
>
> TREVENNON.

Mechanically he smoothed the flimsy paper and attached it with a fastener to the pile on the pad. His face was ashen-white and his fingers trembled as they manipulated the fastener.

"No need for alarm!" he whispered in a voice tense with an agony almost physical. "No need for alarm! My God! That England should have such men as Trevennon to tell her that 'there's no need for alarm!' Dolt! The writing on the wall is in plain, brutal English, and he can not read it! No need for alarm, he cries, and cuts the *Euripides* and *Plassy* adrift, making the loss a treble one! War is clanging and clamoring at our door, and he is deaf to its menace! Our enemy writes a challenge on our city walls, and he is blind and runs by it unheeding, shrieking out with his fatuous smile that 'there's no need for alarm!' My God!"

A streak of red flamed in his thin cheek and a sudden light burned in his eyes as his passionate resentment mastered him. With quick, unequal strides he paced the floor, muttering continuously.

The telephone rang once, but he disregarded it, if indeed he heard. After a minute's silence it rang again, sharply, and then again more sharply still and continuously, until Sir Dean answered it, picking off the receiver with a petulance which betrayed his condition.

"Who is it?" he called. "Who?—Oh, yes, Algy Brett. Sorry I can't see you,

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Algy — engaged — busy — call again, boy. Good-by."

He hung the receiver up with the same petulance with which he had taken it down, and then suddenly changed his mind and rang through to his secretary.

"Mr. Brett was speaking to me a minute since. Call him back and send him up to me. See that we are not disturbed unless a further wire comes."

Algy Brett entered the room hurriedly. He had not even tarried to remove his leather motor-coat or his fur gloves. He pitched them now on to a sofa in an uncontrollable excitement. Sir Dean watched him frozenly.

"Ostermann again?" he asked at last, as his nephew came across to him.

Algy Brett's eyes flamed at the question. A storm of enthusiasm made his words come haltingly.

"I believe so, sir!" he said unevenly. "I could almost swear to it! Have you any news?"

Sir Dean looked at him warily, something of his habitual calm returning to him.

"News?" he said vaguely.

"Yes, sir, news of the *Edward VII*."

"Ah! Then the secret has leaked out, eh?"

"Not exactly leaked out, sir," replied Algy. "I think I ferreted it out."

"Really? For any particular purpose?"

"Merely for the purpose of having another pot-shot at Alsopp Ostermann and to try and regain a little of the self-esteem I lost at Liverpool a month ago! That's all, sir."

Sir Dean picked up the sheaf of telegrams from the desk and played with them absently. His face expressed nothing, but Brett could read in the tensity of his rapid glances the turmoil and anxiety in his brain.

"And you have ferreted out—how much?"

Algy leaned over the desk. His face was very close to his uncle's, and it was curious, with an age allowance, how strangely alike they were.

"A FORTNIGHT ago the *Bellerophon* was reported as missing. She was on her way home from the Mediterranean, and after passing Gib was never again heard of. It is generally supposed that she has sunk with all hands. The Admiralty were unanimous in declaring that such was their belief, though not a sign of wreckage, not a single body, has yet been discovered. Next, the *Prince Louis*—a first-class battleship and only a month launched—was swallowed up in the same mysterious way, leaving not a trace behind her to tell the tale! Then—forty-eight hours ago—three cruisers on their way to the new naval base in the Orkneys have vanished from the face of the waters. Though every signaling station on the coast from Prawle Point to Aldeborough spoke them, every station north of Aldeborough reports that none of the vessels have been sighted! It was that little point which made me scent Ostermann! Why thus far and no farther?

"Then the *Edward VII*, one of our finest ships! She, too, disappears and adds her mystery to the roll! I think you'll agree with me, sir, that her case is more significant than all the others put together and lends color to my suspicions? That a man-of-war, lying off Dover for despatches, in flat, calm water and in the piping times of peace, could vanish in a night and leave not a trace behind her is inconceivable—and yet it is what has happened, is it not? The *Edward VII* was not sunk, for the *Ganges* lying not a mile away would have been aware of it. No, no accident has happened, sir. She has disappeared in the same manner and through the same agency as the other five!"

Sir Dean pitched the bundle of telegrams away from him.

"And now they have sent the *Plassy* and *Euripides* to make the loss worse!" he said bitterly, getting up and walking agitatedly up and down the long room. "The fools have sent them to search for the *Edward VII*— it will be a short search and a sad one, I think! But, after all, perhaps they could not help themselves. If you know so much, the news of the disasters must have leaked out in spite of all our precautions, and to-morrow the public would have been clamoring for a search-party. Perhaps, after all——"

"Oh, no, sir, you're mistaken. The secret is still a secret. The public know nothing of the later disappearances. I became aware of them through the transmission of a wrong message to Lord Vales. It was intended for you, but somehow came through on our private line. Then a few inquiries brought me to Ostermann—and you, sir."

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"Hum. Why Ostermann?"

"I can't quite say. Perhaps because Ostermann has filled my thoughts since he escaped me at Liverpool—perhaps because I alone among you know the awful power possessed by Ostermann's *Gray Ghost*. Perhaps because I look upon him as a devil, and you think of him as a man with all a man's limitations. Because you and all the world think of air-ships as a machine of the future—a problem still unsolved, or incompletely so—something to be laughed at or to be looked upon as the sport of either eccentrics or men craving notoriety! While I *know*, I have seen with my own eyes, I have witnessed the havoc, almost inconceivable, wrought by one of these machines you still practically refuse to credit.

"Alsopp Ostermann is not a man! He is a genius with a devil's brain! And, I might add, he is not an Englishman. It is when I think of the colossal perfection, the stupendous capability, of the air-ship *Gray Ghost* that I instinctively connect the disappearance of five of our fleet to its horrible, unfathomed power of destruction!"

"I AM not so skeptical of air-ships—*Gray Ghost* in particular—as you seem to think, my boy, and if you throw your mind back, you will remember it was I sent you to Liverpool to investigate the sinking of the *Anna-Maria Petersen*. It was I suggested that Alsopp Ostermann and his mysterious, rarely seen airship should be observed. It was I, with some such grotesque idea in my mind as you seemingly have in yours, who called you back just now to discuss this matter of vanishing battleships! Please do not, therefore, accuse me of being stupid. Because I question you is not proof of ignorance."

"Oh, uncle, forgive me! I am a conceited young ass, but I did not intend you to consider yourself included in the catalogue of unbelievers. Why, faith, it was to have my headlong recklessness and wildcat suspicions bolstered up into common sense that I came along to you! You're the only pal I have, sir, so don't go back on me because I'm a gas-bag!"

"My dear boy!" Sir Dean's voice was hsuky and the hand he laid on Algy's shoulder not quite steady. "I'm upset and hasty to-day," he said. "The news is worse even than you know, and the knowledge that I'm powerless—that presently England will be powerless—irritates me! Believe me, Algy, ever since the moment you told me of the ramming and sinking of the *Anna-Maria Petersen* by Alsopp Ostermann's air-ship *Gray Ghost*, I've instinctively connected him with the disappearances of our ships!

"And yet it is not feasible! The pieces will not fit! Granted that *Gray Ghost* can sink a ship, even a man-of-war, silently and unseen, surely there would be some trace of her? Some wreckage? Some bodies? Or supposing, for the sake of our argument, that Ostermann wages war upon our ships from above—do you tell me that our men would not have fought till not one of them remained alive?

"None of the missing ships, save perhaps the *Bellerophon*, was out of sight of land—certainly not so far but that heavy gun-firing would be clearly heard and reported. But *nothing* was heard. Even the *Ganges*, as you remarked a moment since, heard nothing which could by any manner of means be construed into being labeled suspicious, although she was lying within a mile of the *Edward VII* when she vanished so mysteriously into the darkness of the night! Is it possible that there *can* be an explanation?"

"In our wildest moments," interposed Algy thoughtfully, "we never dreamed of an invention so marvelous, so almost incredible, so cruel, as the ram of Ostermann's air-ship, which could sink an Atlantic liner in a few minutes like a paper boat! Nor did we dream of the projectile-throwing machine which the man Hafner describes to us and with which Ostermann launched the fatal bomb which sank Calthew's yacht without an instant's warning! There may be a dozen or more fiendish inventions at this devil's command that we know nothing of, and the possibility of which we'd have scoffed at a month ago!"

"Ah! Our imaginations have been considerably sharpened since a month ago!" said Sir Dean. "And I'm afraid we are in for a good many more shocks before we are through with Mr. Ostermann and his invincible air-ship! No, no, Algy, I am not skeptical of *Gray Ghost's* powers in the smallest degree, but you must admit that it is a very big matter to be convinced of without even an atom of proof. And yet the fact that Ostermann did not rest until Calthew and his rival airship were destroyed—the fact that he sent all those souls on the *Anna-*

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Maria Petersen to a calculated death in his determination to rid his path of Calthew—shows us that Ostermann, judged in the light of his deeds and their motives, which we can not believe is merely professional jealousy, is the enemy of England! Couple that with the loss of our seven ships of war——"

"Seven? Seven?" ejaculated Algy. "*Seven?*"

"The *Leviathan* was due at Portsmouth yesterday afternoon and has not yet been reported."

"Phew! He works quickly, eh?"

"Very!" said Sir Dean expressively. "Too quickly for safety. If he had been a little more leisurely we perhaps should not have focused him so early in the drama! Now the thing is, What's to be done? Where is the man Hafner—still with you?"

"Yes, sir, still with me. He is so much better that he's able to do odd jobs for the pater in the garden and helps Kelson with the car."

"I CAN'T understand Ostermann being so stupid as to permit a man so obviously dangerous to him to be at large—in fact, I rather wonder he did not murder him sooner than dismiss him, knowing, as he must have known, that he was to a great extent in the man's power."

"I don't for a minute believe that Ostermann realized how much the fellow knew. I fancy he looked upon him as a dull and drunken mechanic, but I think he would have murdered him that night at Formby if he had had half a second to do it in. Perhaps he thought Hafner was already a dead un! He looked first cousin to a corpse if ever a man did as he lay on the floor in that fit! Anyway, he's not dead and we've got him and I think I see my way to making more use of him than the dad does hoeing weeds out of a lawn! They say 'set a thief to catch a thief,' you know, so why not 'set an air-ship to catch an air-ship'? Bully idea, I think, don't you, uncle?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite——"

"Catch on? Well, listen. A pal of mine—old Timmock, you know—has a very good air-ship with a very rotten motor and a very rotten something else, I forget what. Anyway, Timmock can't get it to go; came down last week with it and smashed his arm. He's dead off flying anyway, and would lend me the machine with all the pleasure in life. Hafner is a genius in a mad kind of way and has already been pottering about in my workshop with the little motor I'd been amusing myself with. Money can do a lot, and with plenty of it and Hafner I believe we shall be able to fight Ostermann with his own weapons within twenty-four hours! What do you say, sir?"

"I don't like to sanction the risk, my boy. Your mother would never forgive me if anything happened to you," said Sir Dean, slowly and seriously.

But Algy broke in upon his opposition with enthusiastic fervor, the light of adventurous battle shining in his youthful eyes.

"If you refuse to sanction the plan, you are tacitly signing a declaration of war within a month—perhaps within less than a month, sir!" he cried, his cheeks aflame. "And shall we be prepared for that with seven of our best ships missing—with the *Euripides* and *Plassy*, nine ships missing! Think of it, sir! Practically the whole Dreadnought Division!"

"I have thought of it, boy," said Sir Dean slowly—very, very slowly.

Then, standing close to the boy he looked long and earnestly into his excited eyes.

"Tell your mother it is for England's sake!" he almost whispered.

II

THE night was perfect for their purpose—dark and cloudy and still, not a breath of wind seeming to mar the excellence of the atmospheric conditions. High above the earth, invisible in the murky heavens, *Star of the Sea*, Timmock's air-ship soared, and seated in its canoe-shaped body were Algy Brett and Silas Hafner.

With the keen eagerness of a half-mad fanatic, Hafner had seized upon Brett's plan for tracking Ostermann. His genius became rampant. He set to work on Timmock's dilapidated ship and, working like a madman for almost thirty hours, fitted it with a new motor which, in grim compliment to his late master's inventive brain, he christened the "Hafner-Ostermann"; repaired the shattered propeller; fixed in position a couple of the strongest head-lights available, and rigged up a searchlight forward.

Algy Brett marveled when he surveyed the machine in the shed that such a vast concern, with such ambitious accouter-

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ments, could possibly fly successfully even if it did manage to rise from its cradle of supports. He spoke his disbelief to Hafner and was answered by a shrill laugh of derision.

"Too heavy?" the man growled. "Too heavy! *Gray Ghost* carries thirty tons of ammunition alone! Think of that! Thirty tons! That's not counting mounted guns or dynamite torpedoes! Aw! Aw! *Gray Ghost* is something to be frightened of, I can tell yer! *Gray Ghost* 'ull change the face of the map before long. They'll conquer England with her, and Ostermann will be leading 'em! He'd do it with some reason, too!"

"Reason?"

"Aw, reason! A million o' money is a reason enough, I should say! And at one time he would have been content with forty thousand from the British Government! For forty thousand pounds they might have had *Gray Ghost* and Ostermann's mighty brain and *me!* Aw, and me! Even Ostermann was not able to do without me at first—not till he had learned all I could learn 'im! An' then he threw me out——"

"And now we are going to track him down and ruin him!" said Algy, with intent. And with successful intent, too, for Hafner forgot the story of his past and flung himself with a fresh energy into the completing of the instrument of his bitter revenge. Nor was he satisfied until he could say he had finished and that *Star of the Sea* was ready to start on her journey of adventures through the mysterious heavens in quest of a man whose every hour of liberty was a fresh menace and an ever-approaching danger to England.

SIR DEAN DENSHAM had come down to Liss to see the air-ship start, and he had whispered the information in Algy's ears, just as he climbed into the aerial car, that still there was no news of the *Leviathan*, and that he held great fears as to the safety of a flotilla of destroyers which was to leave Portsmouth that night for Portland.

"Their departure has been kept as close a secret as possible, my boy," he said earnestly. "But I feel sure that our enemy—whoever and whatever he is—will consider them too great a prize to be missed, should he gain the knowledge in time. I tried hard to convey some of my forebodings to Lord Vales and Admiral Leafellan, but, needless to say, they laughed me to scorn. I even went so far as to tell them of the Liverpool business, but I only made matters worse. They ridiculed the whole idea and suggested that a man in his dotage was not a safe person to hold a position such as mine! So you see——"

"And yet they themselves can offer no other, no more tangible solution to the mystery of the missing men-of-war, eh? Ah, well, we'll show 'em, Uncle Dean! We'll bring him back tied to our tail and then the laugh will be on our side!"

"Bring yourself home safe and I'll be content, I think," replied Sir Dean, waving his hand in farewell as the *Star of the Sea* rose slowly and majestically into the still night air, the motor running smoothly and all but silently, the head-lights shining out into the darkness like the eyes of an unseen giant, the two men sitting like pigmies in the midst of the marvelous machine.

Higher and higher till the atmosphere grew bitter; till the lights of the towns below looked like pale glow-worms; till they faded altogether; till the miles fled away as the ship rushed faster and faster through the chill and clinging clouds; till in an incredible quickness of time the roar of the sea sounded like far-off thunder in their listening ears.

"The channel, Hafner!" whispered Brett, awed by the incredible speed with which they had covered the miles.

The *Star of the Sea* swooped suddenly downwards—down, down, down, till the warning roar from St. Catherine's mighty throat thundered in their ears and the clear beats of a steamer's engines throbbed through the air as she raced out to sea from Southampton water. It was the Guernsey boat,and the knowledge brought Algy back to reality with a jerk. Up till that moment he had lived as in a whirling dream where nothing was real, nothing was earthly, nothing was human. He himself had been but a spirit flying through space with a rapidness which created nothing but chaos in his excited, struggling brain! But the Guernsey boat plowing her way through the dark waters was a prosaic fact which brought reason back to him.

He turned to Hafner with a quick firmness in his voice which had been absent till that moment.

"You're a wizard, Hafner!" he cried tri-

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umphantly, watching with admiring eyes the complete mastery the man displayed as he manipulated the gears—pressing a dozen electric buttons in quick succession and with a master hand; adjusting a lever with a jerk that seemed almost careless; possessing almost an uncanny knowledge of his whereabouts; looking indeed the wizard Brett styled him as he sat crouched up like a monkey on a narrow seat in the center of the hollowed deck, his long arms never at rest, his bright eyes ever alert and on the lookout, his nimble fingers flashing from point to point, from button to button, from lever to lever, the wheel gripped between his knees like a vice.

"You're a wizard, Hafner!" repeated Algy, moving nearer. "Faith, I should think even *Gray Ghost* couldn't beat us for speed, eh?"

Hafner turned his eyes for a brief second on his companion and there was a world of scorn in them.

"Nothing could beat *Gray Ghost!*" he said sharply. "If she met us now she'd wipe us out like a man wipes a fly off a wall! She has *four* motors, each one capable of giving four times the speed of this one of ours. If I had had three *months* to get ready in, instead of thirty hours, I'd perhaps have managed to make this 'ere ship able to go at half *Gray Ghost's* speed—even then only half! Ostermann wasn't the man to leave his inventions kicking about the workshop for me nor any one else to spy at! Not 'e!"

"Phew! Four motors, each four times the speed of this little one?" cried Algy incredulously. "Sixteen times quicker than *Star of the Sea?* Phew! Not much chance for us, then, in a hand-to-hand fight, eh?"

"None at all, I should say," replied Hafner dryly.

"Then we'll be more diplomatic than brave, Hafner. We'll learn all we can, and then we'll run away home—unseen."

HAFNER had cut off power, and they were lying all but motionless in the air a mile above Portsmouth. All lights had been extinguished and in the darkness of the night they were absolutely invisible. In the water a mighty battleship was playing a search-light far and wide, its broad ray cutting a glaring path of dazzling white through the black night. Once it seemed almost to focus *Star of the Sea* hanging like a bat in the heavens, and Hafner immediately pressed the rising-power button and they soared higher into the clouds out of the search-light's range.

Later, when the stillness of midnight settled over the world and but a scattering of lights remained to mark the towns and ships, with the flashings of the Needles' lantern to warn and welcome, Hafner, at a word from Algy, dropped the air-ship to within a hundred feet of the sea.

Then, at less than half speed, they skimmed hither and thither, slowly and carefully, like a bird seeking prey. Suddenly Hafner grunted and Brett's eyes followed his pointing finger.

Looming up in the darkness, moving slowly, forging ahead almost noiselessly, a black mass spread like a blot upon the waters of the Solent.

It was the flotilla of destroyers!

Algy felt his heart thump and the blood hum in his ears. But one word repeated itself again and again in his brain. Ostermann! Ostermann! Ostermann! Would he appear? Would he reveal himself? Would he attack? Through the stubbornness and incredulity of two men a flotilla of thirty destroyers was steaming placidly down the Solent on their way to—to where? To Portland, according to orders. But, if Ostermann chose to countermand those orders—where then?

"Keep well astern, Hafner!" he whispered hoarsely, noting with inward wonder how rapidly they were capable of overhauling the destroyers.

Once they passed over a fishing-boat, her two masthead lights, one upon the other, winking at them like stars—the phosphorus gleaming as her drift-net cut the water.

Abreast of Swanage something happened, something undefinable, something which was at first unnoticeable and insoluble.

The entire flotilla was changing its course! The nose of every destroyer was coming round, point by point, to the open channel!

And at the same moment that he became aware of the change in the flotilla's movements, Algy saw a change in Hafner. He became nervous and excited and a wildness sprang into his light eyes. His fingers twitched as they did their work, and his nose sniffed the air like a starving wolf scenting food.

"By Jingo!" Algy muttered to himself, "I'm hanged if I don't believe he's *scenting*

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Ostermann! Hafner, man, what's the matter?"

"We've got him! He's somewhere near —listen! Hear 'im?"

The man's face, cheek by jowl with his own and strangely gray in the darkness, thrilled Algy with an unaccustomed dread, and he wished suddenly that Alsopp Ostermann and his mysterious air-ship had never come into his life. A certainty grew upon him that Hafner was mad. And he was alone with him! Yet, in spite of all, he found himself listening with straining ears to hear what Hafner declared was fact.

"No, no, I hear nothing—" he began, but, even as he spoke, he heard the beating of wings high above him in the impenetrable blackness of the skies and knew that somewhere very near to them *Gray Ghost* was plying her trade!

Roughly and with trembling fingers he dragged a bottle of brandy from the locker and forced some between Hafner's clenched teeth.

"Man, man!" he cried passionately. "This is our chance! Ostermann is up there above us! What are we to do? Rouse yourself, Hafner! Rouse yourself, or *Gray Ghost* will take toll from us too! Hurry!"

The brandy steadied the man. With a firm hand he opened the valve and the air-ship flashed like an unseen meteor through the air, rising higher and higher with a swiftness that bereft one of breath. And, as they rose, the beating of *Gray Ghost's* wings came nearer and nearer until at last Algy could see her bulky grayness floating ahead of them. So close to each other were they that the whirring of *Gray Ghost's* propeller sounded distinctly in their ears like the purring of a monster cat.

"We have him! We have him!" cried Hafner, his voice trembling with an uncontrollable excitement. "Ostermann will pay his debt to me to-night or by —— I'll pay 'im with my own life! Aw, yes, Mister Ostermann, aw, yes, I'll——"

Algy interrupted him sharply. "Your revenge must wait until we have discovered his secret! Remember that you have come up here with me to help me discover the whereabouts of our missing men-of-war, and to take Ostermann prisoner if we can. Your revenge will come in due time. Now you must keep your head on and your hair on and don't gas like an — By heavens! *Look!*"

GRAY GHOST was flying easily and gracefully directly over the fleet of destroyers and slightly ahead of them, and wherever she turned they followed like sheep! They seemed to have clustered up to each other and looked like a swarm of black bees. They had altered their course at the same moment that *Gray Ghost* altered hers and were now heading up channel as though making for the Straits. And pouring down from the air-ship there seemed to be an enveloping ray of inky blackness, wrapping the flotilla in an invisible pall.

"——!" murmured Algy, as the truth came to him. "They're in that villain's pay! Ostermann has bought them! See how they obey him!"

"See how they obey *Gray Ghost*, you mean!" muttered Hafner, staring with moody eyes at the bird-like ship circling through the ether of the night before him.

"Obey *Gray Ghost?* What do you mean?"

"They're helpless, all them ships down there! Helpless! There's not one of 'em could break away or change her course, no matter 'ow much they would like to! An' I don't doubt as how they'd all like to, if they could. But they can't, so long as *Gray Ghost's* above 'em and wants 'em!"

Algy stared at him, surprise and horror and unbelief struggling for mastery in his eyes; his brain trying to adjust the new ideas as the old ones were shattered so ruthlessly at the sight of those helpless ships below him following their aerial master as tamely as a whipped cur!

"How?" he questioned. "How?"

"By the pressing of a single button," said Hafner grimly, speeding faster ahead as *Gray Ghost* left them far astern, outdistancing them with an ease that was appalling. "How it works is Ostermann's secret—that goes without saying, o' course. But by the pressure of a button an inch in diameter that man can set in action a magnetic force which will enable 'im to conquer the world! With it he can tear down solid blocks of buildings —can carry a factory chimney through the air after him like the tail of a kite! War would be a pretty picnic with 'im on the enemy's side!"

"But the men aboard those ships? Why don't they do something?"

"It's all they can do to keep alive, I should think!" exclaimed Hafner, a grim smile twisting his lips. "They're probably half

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dead already—certainly they're stunned and senseless with the terrible strength of the voltage!"

"Poor devils!" whispered Algy, a wave of anger against Ostermann shaking him to the roots of his being and a wild desire for revenge gaining strength as every moment passed.

He thought of the missing Dreadnoughts, and a wild laugh escaped his lips. No wonder no wreckage was found, or that no bodies were ever recovered! He thought of Lord Vales and the First Lord and wondered in a passion of rage whether they would scoff now if they could see those thirty destroyers following the magician's wand like a bunch of needles clinging to an unseen magnet!

"Why don't we feel the influence too, Hafner?" he asked unsteadily.

"Because we're keeping *above* 'im and because 'e don't see us. I'd risk trying to shoot 'im if I thought I could do it first try. But it would be impossible. To get an aim we'd have to have a projector. Besides, if 'e spotted us he would simply turn the current on to us or sink us straight away with a bomb. There'd be no waiting to find out whether we were friend or foe with Ostermann, I can tell yer! 'E never takes no chances, 'e don't! It's kill yer first, and 'Who are you?' afterwards!"

"You're right, Hafner, but we'll get him yet. We may have to bide our time, but we'll get him yet!"

III

CALAIS had faded into the distance long ago; Heligoland was a gray pinnacle in the gray dawn; Kiel Harbor lay below, cloud-covered, swathed in impenetrable mist, sullenly aggressive and grimly secretive.

In the space of those short hours between the midnight and the dawn the journey had been accomplished, and without a single challenge to delay the involuntary passage —slicing through the lumbering clouds, aspiring to the heights of heaven, dipping with a sickening, shuddering swiftness to the depths. It was incredible. And yet as Algy gazed down into the abysmal depths below him and traced the mist-smeared formations of the great basin of Kiel Harbor he knew that it was the bitter truth.

With the morning the clouds dispersed and the mist melted beneath a struggling sun and a fresh breeze. *Star of the Sea* dropped lower, carefully, watchfully, gradually, till the whole expanse of the harbor lay like a panorama under their gaze and the mystery of the missing Dreadnoughts was revealed.

For there, sinister and gray and powerful, England's finest weapons of defense, prisoners and helpless, were the lost men-of-war and the hapless flotilla! Algy gritted his teeth at the sight of them and the knowledge of his own helplessness. What was to be done? What *could* be done? He alone could not release them, and even before England demanded their return the threatened war might be begun! And where would their navy be with the pick of the Dreadnought Division in the hands of the enemy? No, no, something ought to be done and now, *now!* But what?

Gray Ghost had swept away into the mist an hour since and had not returned. They had heard the rushing swish of the wind as she raced past them, invisible in the heights, but apparently close. They listened to the whirring of her racing engines and the beating of her massive wings thundering past their ears—listened till the thunder lessened to a throb; till the throb was a mere pulse beating in the stillness of the dawn; till at last silence, colossal and magical, enveloped them.

Hafner had slept for a brief half-hour while Algy watched. Now he came forward, refreshed and vigilant, his clever brain wide awake.

"We can go down and investigate if you like, sir," he said, finishing a cup of hot coffee at a gulp. "I rather fancy *Gray Ghost* has gone for good. At any rate we ought to be safe enough for an hour yet, and with your permission I could have a look round and spy out the lay."

They dropped to within a few feet of the ground, and Hafner descended, leaving Algy in the car, alert and ready if an emergency call came.

He was away for more than half an hour, and Algy was beginning to get anxious, when he heard the electric bell tinkle, and, peering down, saw Hafner standing below. Quickly he lowered the rope, and the man came up, hand over hand, with the rapidity of one in mortal fear.

"I had to run for it!" he cried, panting, hauling in the rope and directing Algy to get the ship out of sight range. "It's a won-

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der they let me get back at all. The place is guarded like a prison—there's a regiment of mounted police inside the walls and soldiers outside. All the English sailors—officers and men—are packed like herrings in a temporary j il about half a mile away, and the ships have all got steam up. There's none but men-o'-war in the harbor, and they're all ready to sail out when the word of command comes! *Gray Ghost*'s done its work well, I can tell yer! An' so has Ostermann! An' so 'ave his friends down there! An' they'll reward 'im and laud 'im to the skies—'im and 'is *Gray Ghost* an' 'is marvelous brain! But they've forgot me! Ostermann's forgot me an' they've forgot me! I'd have worked my fingers to the bone for *Gray Ghost*—I pretty near did, too!—but Ostermann got frightened o' me! Thought I was dangerous, did he? Aw, yes, an' so I am! Dangerous I am, d'ye hear, mister? Dangerous I am! I'll have my own back on Ostermann yet, or die getting it! Forgot me, 'e did! Flung me off like an old rag when he thought he'd picked my brains clean, 'e did! Aw, 'e'll remember me in about twenty minutes' time!"

THE man was white with excitement and his eyes bulged in his head. His fingers tripped over each other as he fumbled in a paroxysm of haste at the contents of a small locker built in under the shaft-case.

Algy eyed him curiously. "You've discovered something, Hafner, and I command you to tell me what it is. Remember you are in *my* pay now, and you owe it to me to confide in me. What is it? Tell me."

Hafner's fingers stopped their hurried searching, and Hafner's eyes came round slowly and scanned Brett's face. There was a sullen obstinacy in the set of his jaw that told its own story.

"Don't you come it over me, me lad, or I'll let you know who's the man wot knows how to deal with yer! Ostermann's *my* game, an' I'll lag 'im how I likes!"

"I think you won't," said Algy quietly, and Hafner found himself looking down the cold and glistening steel of a revolver. In spite of the fact that he was a one-idea madman Hafner was no fool. He realized Brett's game was no less serious than his own; that in all probability he was more than likely to take even the most stringent measures to ensure its success, and that, after all, a mechanic's life was not of much consequence when the peace of a nation was at stake. So he calmed himself as best he could and proceeded to explain.

"I can tell it you in one sentence," he said sullenly. "I found their powder-magazines."

Algy's eyes met Hafner's pale ones and for a full minute they stared at each other and neither spoke. Hafner's intention read like a printed message written on the discs of his shifty eyes.

"It has enough in it to blow every ship down there into splinters and leave not a man alive to tell the tale! Forts, observatory, dockyards, they'll all go in one crash and Ostermann'll have paid a bit of 'is bill!"

A sudden light blazed in Algy's eyes as he listened. The road to fame and fortune lay suddenly before him illuminated with a light so brilliant that for a moment it dazzled him. Here was his chance! England's chance!

He threw back his head and laughed aloud in sheer joy and excitement.

"You're a fool, Hafner!" he cried boyishly. "Ostermann wouldn't suffer a ha'penny your way. Listen to my plan and say if it isn't a better one! It'll make Ostermann eat humble pie, I bet!"

"I'm goin' to make 'im eat *muck* afore I've done with 'im! Aw, I am."

"Listen to my scheme." As he spoke Algy whipped out a fountain pen and commenced writing rapidly on a pad. "Drop us down to within hailing distance, fit this note into a canister and fling it over to 'em. The instant it goes over shoot up as fast as you can make her go, or they'll try and pot us. Understand?"

"Aw, I understand. But what's in the paper?"

"A threat to drop a bomb into their powder-magazine unless they consent to set free our men within the hour and to open the barriers and permit every British ship in the harbor to sail safely out! If they consent, they are to hoist the Union Jack over the fort there; if not——"

"If not," rejoined Hafner with grim humor, "they'll be hoisted to 'eaven, eh?"

"Exactly," said Algy, smiling. "But I don't think they'll want to do that. The only trouble is that either Ostermann may come back, or else they may send up an airship of their own to settle our hash."

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"Then we'd run for it. There ain't a ship built, other than *Gray Ghost*, that'll be able to overtake us, bar accidents. Let 'em try!"

"Right! Now then, are you ready?"

Star of the Sea dropped with shuddering swiftness, lower, lower, lower, till the angry amazement on the faces of the watching men below was plainly discernible. A crowd came running, soldiers mostly—soldiers and sailors and police and gold-laced officials. With a quick distinction Brett picked out a man whose uniform and aloofness from the many proclaimed him of high position and authority.

A word to Hafner, directing the course. Then, as the *Star of the Sea* flew low for a swift instant, Algy leaned over and tossed the canister overboard, aimed true to the man's very feet.

The crowd scattered with shrieks and violence, thinking the tin a bomb, and wild confusion for a moment mastered one and all. And in it the *Star of the Sea* slid through the skies, higher and higher, till to those below she was but a speck in heaven's gray.

THE stipulated hour passed like an endless century to the men in the air.

Time after time they swooped earthwards, reconnoitering, their hearts in their mouths, one thought filling their minds. Each time came disappointment. Little clusters of men collected and gossiped and dispersed. The soldiers doing sentry-go before the forts and ammunition stores glanced ever and anon above the battlements to where *Star of the Sea* flecked the sky. Intuitively Algy knew that all the telegraph and telephone wires spreading their network over the countless roofs were humming continuously with numberless messages to headquarters for advice. He wondered whether they were striving to locate Alsopp Ostermann, trying to get him to come to their assistance. If they succeeded in doing that, they would be safe enough, for poor little *Star of the Sea* was no match for the vulture *Gray Ghost*.

But the minutes dragged away, and still they were the only tenants of the heavens above Kiel, and still the sable eagle of Germany floated proudly in the wind.

The morning was turning out a glorious one; the sun growing warmer and more brilliant as each moment passed and the chill faded from the air. The whole country lay like a map below the two men in the *Star of the Sea*—the vast harbors linked together by grim forts and battlemented walls; the long, tortuous canal winding its way through the land from sea to sea, dotted with ships, fringed by countless villages, a marvel of workmanship and ingenuity, a mighty artery in a mighty country, the means to more power, the gateway to more possessions, a colossal outlet for a colossal ambition.

Away to the right of the grim, gray, relentless-looking forts lay the long, low building which Hafner had discovered was the powder-magazine, and abreast of it and covering a vast area were the ammunition stores and factories. Algy marked them well, and, as the hour advanced to its completion, sailed to a position directly above them. Hafner had never ceased working from the moment the canister had been flung overboard, and Algy was astonished at the progress he had made.

"You're a clever fellow, Hafner," he said, admiringly watching the deft fingers darting to and fro. "All the same, I don't think I'd have started off so gaily on this voyage with you if I'd known you had those villainous-looking bombs on board! What made you think of them? Ostermann?"

"Yes, Ostermann. I thought I might have got a chance to settle with 'im."

"Hum! Well, it's a lucky thing for us, as it happens. But do you *really* think they'll hold out?"

"That looks like it, don't it?" the man answered, jerking his thumb downwards in the direction of the flag on the fort.

And as they gazed down a regiment of soldiers marched out into the square behind the fort.

"What are they going to do now?" said Brett wonderingly. "Looks as though—by Jove, Hafner! they're going to try and shoot us down! Quick, man, quick!—let's get higher!"

Even as he spoke the crack of their rifles snapped through the air, again and again, but without effect. For the *Star of the Sea* was hopelessly beyond the reach of bullets, and Algy laughed gleefully as he realized it.

"They'll have to give in!" he spluttered in his excitement. "It's no go, my good chaps! It's no go! How much more time, Hafner? Isn't the hour up? Are those beastly looking things ready?"

"Ten minutes more, sir," said Hafner, looking at his watch. "And when you say

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the word, I'm ready. See, you sit here so as to have a better grip of this lever. When you say 'Go!' drop full speed till that finger there points to fifty-five, then start her up again for all you know 'ow, or we'll be among the victims! Understand, sir?"

"Yes, perfectly. Drop till fifty-five and then cut up as though the fiends were after me, eh?"

"Aw, an' so they *will* be! Five minutes more, sir."

"What fools they are!" said Algy between his teeth, which were chattering in spite of himself. He looked enviously at Hafner, whose face was perfectly expressionless, though his fingers worked ceaselessly at an infernal machine which meant death to thousands in the moment it was hurled out of the air-ship.

"Three minutes more, sir."

The man's voice surely held exultation in it. Perhaps he was really mad and killing was a joy to him.

"Two minutes more, sir. Get ready. I'm ready."

The perspiration stood out on Algy's forehead in beads; his eyes lost their look of life and became glazed and glassy. He stared downwards at the microscopic dot representing the flag until his brain reeled and the blood hammered in his ears.

"*One minute more, sir!*"

Hafner's voice in his ear was the voice of the executioner who glories in his duty. Algy started up and gripped his arm in a terror of anxiety. "Wait! Wait!" he cried loudly, anguish in his tone. "Give them a moment more——"

He pleaded almost hysterically, clogging the man's movements with desperate, clinging, hampering fingers.

"*Two seconds more!* We have them! We have them!"

"Wait! Wait!" commanded Brett suddenly, struggling to control himself as he realized the other's inexorable instinct to murder. "Wait, I say!"

And as he spoke he dropped the air-ship lower and cried out exultantly: "Look! Look! They're lowering the flag! Look, Hafner. By ——! it's the Union Jack, Hafner! Hafner, they're hoisting the Union Jack!"

"That means, I suppose, that I can't test this 'ere ——"

"It means surrender! It means that we'll get back our ships and our men! It means promotion for me and a power of a lot of money for you! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

AND two hours later nine British men-of-war sailed out from Kiel Harbor, followed by a flotilla of thirty destroyers.

They departed silently, but there was triumph and a promise of revenge in the proud majesty of the white ensigns as they floated out upon the breeze, and the Union Jack still floated above the fort. A prophecy, perhaps.

Who knows?

"But Ostermann is still at large!" said Algy Brett, setting the air-ship's course for home. "And all we've got is a feather out of his tail!"

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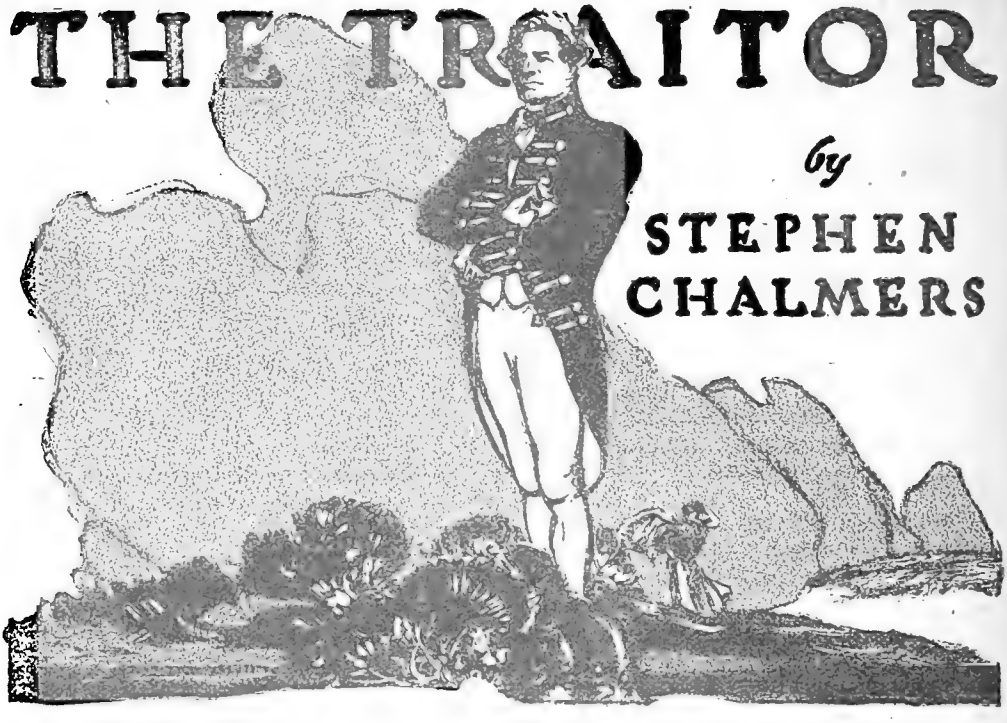
THE TRAITOR

by STEPHEN CHALMERS



WHERE the Canadian line slips down from the St. Croix River and gathers up for Great Britain nearly all the isles of Passamaquoddy Bay, it segregates the last lone island, Campobello, and wriggles out to sea through the Lubec Narrows at the easternmost point of the United States.

In 1786, when Admiral William Fitzwilliam Sarvice, who had been granted Campobello by George III for valiant naval services, and John Burleigh, the squatter, were arguing King's patent versus prior occupancy, a stranger came to the island. He came and, without a word to or from the fiery old Admiral, occupied the empty house on the Friar's Bluff facing Lubec on the American shore.

Probably the Admiral knew the man's name, hailing and calling; but because he treated the stranger as a person non-existent, the islanders smelled mystery. John Allan, the old Revolutionary hero, who ran the store in Welchpool, the island metropolis, knew the man's name at least. Colonel Allan frequently charged gallons of rum to the account of "Benedict Arnold."

This Arnold was a tall man, nearly as silent and morose as big John Burleigh, the squatter; but Arnold impressed one as not silent by nature. At the foot of the bluff upon which the lonely, half-ruined house stood, there was a natural rock phenomenon that looked like a hooded monk; The Friar, the islanders called it; Skedapsis, the stone manikin, it was to the Indians. For centuries it had been standing, stone-cowled and rock-jowled, with arms folded, knee-deep in the sea. Its sunken stone eyes seemed to stare across the narrow strait at the republican shore.

The stranger was the flesh-and-blood embodiment of the spirit of the stone monk. For hours of the day, and often of the night, he would stand on this bluff with his arms folded, staring across the strait.

That the Admiral knew something was

EDITOR'S NOTE.—This story fills in "the missing chapter" of Benedict Arnold's history after his treachery. With the exception of the love-interest, everything here told about this unfortunate man is true and is part of Campobello Island's history. The incident of the attempt to get him over the line to hang him is not generally known and is perfectly true. The house in which he lived alone and friendless still remains as a ruin, and the Allan family still keep as souvenirs his signed orders for rum.

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clear when one day Aaron Bunker, the one-armed sea-lion's former quartermaster and present serving-man, brought a spicy tale to John Allan's store. Over a glass of Jamaica rum Aaron told Marvin Patch, Davie Lyon, Jack Pitch and the rest of the local lights how Mr. Arnold had had the temerity to ask the Admiral to dinner, and how the Admiral had waxed furious and replied (per word of mouth and Aaron Bunker) that he'd sooner swallow his cocked hat and horse-pistols than eat dinner with "a —— traitor!"

"Aye, aye, gentlemen," said Aaron, "an' took it without a word, he did! Turned as white 's a new sail an' closed the door in my teeth. But, short o' a hangin' at the yardarm, I never see sich a look on a human's face."

It was Tomah Neptune, the last of a line of tribal sagamores, who discovered and revealed something which added to the mystery. Wandering through the woods on the bluff one day, Tomah caught sight of the "Skedapsis man" sitting on a log in earnest conversation with a woman. When Tomah grunted out that the woman was "big John Bolly squaw," great was the amazement. Mrs. Burleigh!

Mrs. Burleigh, whom John married when she was Kitty Prendergast, a laughing, lovable sort of girl not wholly awake to life, knew nothing of love save that it was the mystery which her big, silent, able husband would reveal to her. The name Kitty was as suggestive of the half-born phase of her as Katharine presently described the woman who stood awake after that first year of marvel, ending in motherhood. Katharine came to life all at once as a woman who had discovered the magnificence of love at the expense of freedom to choose her mate.

John Burleigh's slow brain saw no change in her, save that she grew quiet and lavished a love that was almost unearthly upon the baby. The big man wondered, and his wonder, like that of a bull at a sudden flaunt of red, turned to fury—fury of the inburning kind, however.

He wondered if it were the baby. He studied the baby instead of the mother. He studied it so much that he became obsessed with the baby and thought that that was what had happened to Katharine.

Then he lavished a brainless, big-hearted love upon the child. This excluding infatuation resulted in a new phase in the misunderstood wife. She suddenly became indifferent to the baby and doubly indifferent to its father. She became as silent as silent John himself. They rarely exchanged more than a word of greeting or a remark about the weather, and John Burleigh would come home to find Katharine sitting at the table by the window, her chin in her hand and her eyes fixed with a kind of hungry yearning upon the far islands of the sunset.

As time went on, the indifference became fixed and mutual. Big John, having pondered the mystery and found no solution, gave up theory and accepted the condition as one of the peculiarities of womankind. The gossips were of the opinion that, as the wife of the squatter king, Kitty was "settin' up to be as grand as the Admiral's lady." Some went so far as to hint that Kitty was "hankerin' after the right man."

Until the stranger came to the bluff, however, there was never the shadow of a fact upon which to base even so facile a thing as suspicion.

II

IT WAS a Spring afternoon and John Burleigh was up at Casco Island, "drumming" fish into one of the many weirs that were yet to star these waters as an international fishing-ground. Katharine had taken the road for Welchpool, ostensibly to buy provisions at the store. An hour later she stood in John Allan's place, fingering a woolen blanket.

"More rum for Mr. Arnold," she heard the Colonel say with a note of irony.

Katharine looked sharply at the straight old man with the strong, but kindly face and the sandy hair. He was frowning down upon a scrap of paper which a boy had brought. Presently he shook his head and placed the paper on the stab.

"Why do you send it?" asked Katharine.

"Why?" said John Allan slowly, turning his eyes full upon the woman. "I think I will tell *you* why, Kitty. In the first place, this is a British island, and possibly Mr. Benedict Arnold has more right here than I have. My head was worth a hundred pounds sterling here not ten years ago."

"*We* ain't holdin' old scores ag'in you, Colonel!" piped Marvin Patch from the rum counter.

"Also, Kitty," continued Allan, unheeding, "if Mr. Arnold made his money as he

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saw fit, he has a right to spend it the same way. And then, my dear woman, the more rum he drinks the sooner will he be at peace with the world, although, as long as there is such a thing as personal honor, the world'll never be at peace with him."

"I—I don't understand."

"It might be as well, Kitty, if you did," said the Colonel gently.

When Katharine left the store she was conscious of the old veteran's eyes following her. She took the road back toward Burleigh's Beach, but once out of sight of Welchpool, she struck a path that led toward the Friar's Bluff.

Colonel Allan, who had lived with Tomah and his tribe as a brother and held the Indians to the American cause while the British fired them to attack the unprotected frontier, had acquired some of the keenness of his red friends. From the little window of his accounting-room at the rear of the store his gaze was fixed upon two trees on the ridge that sloped upward toward the bluff. In about fifteen minutes he saw the figure of a woman pass between the two trees, walking hurriedly.

The Colonel looked down at the papers on his desk with a regretful headshake. Like a flash a memory picture came to him. It was of his own wife, who was imprisoned by the British at Fort Cumberland in the hope that she might reveal the whereabouts of her "rebel husband"—the rough-tongued, expatriated Scot who expressed his opinion of British tyranny in Nova Scotia, and escaped British fury in an open boat, to land on the American shore and win the savages to the side of liberty.

Did she betray him? John Allan smiled through a mist of tears. Not she! They gave her up. The English captains kissed her hand, sent her over the line and said it was a pity such a woman had such a husband. George Washington knew—and perhaps thanked God—that such a man had such a wife!

THE other man, Arnold, was also an expatriate. He served another country than his own. Unlike the Colonel, he did not first announce his intention to the world and to his country in particular.

Arnold was at that moment in the blackest period of his career. A man of refinement and polished education, a courtier of the high places, a soldier of the field, a once-respected general in the tent, in this darkest hour of his long remorse his very virtues seemed to conspire to his punishment.

In sleep he was in General Washington's tent, and the cold, calm face that he had both hated and revered was turned to his; the far, thoughtful eyes looked into his, and the voice that put aside habitual reserve in the moment of absolute trust, stirred the traitor's conscience until he cried aloud in the night. And liquor was only a further stimulant of the memories that he sought to drown.

After his one act of treachery, when fate, circumstance and the opportunity conspired to bear upon his weak spot, Arnold went to London. He had fought for the British cause; yet it was characteristic of the Britisher that he should treat the American traitor with contempt clothed in exquisite courtesy. The refinement of Arnold sensed it; the conscience of Arnold recoiled, wounded.

He went to St. John in the Province of New Brunswick, where there was British safety with American respect for a man's private affairs and past history. But even here the covert thumb, the hellish whisper, the evasive glance, followed him. The echo of three words seemed to encircle him:

"Arnold—the traitor!"

The store that he opened at St. John did not succeed. He quarreled with his partner, or his partner quarreled with him. There were lawsuits for recovery of debt, or against recovery, for his own debts were numerous. He drank heavily, to drown, not so much his present misfortunes as that one which was at the bottom of them all.

Then his punishment took a queer turn. It was as if the devil, to whom he had sold his honor, paid him personal attention and devised a diabolical form of expiation.

Like that Philip Nolan of later story, Arnold yearned for the country which had renounced him. The same sensitive nature which had driven him, disgruntled, to a vengeance upon his compatriots for fancied slights and imagined wrongs, now turned his mind against the land to which he had tried to sell his country. Again he hated the British and all that was British; again he loved the United States and all that was of the United States.

He came to Campobello Island—a lonely man, prematurely aged by bitterness and

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dissipation. Perhaps the Admiral was apprised of his coming. Perhaps the high persons who apprised him thought this remote outpost of British soil peculiarly fitted to Arnold's dilemma. So the traitor came to the desolate house on the bluff and proceeded to live, as John Allan's books testify, on salt cod and rum. So progressed the chapter before the swift descent to death in a London garret.

By night the high winds howled around the lonesome house, wherein was a wide-eyed man staring at blackness over his solitary couch, or lying, head in arms upon the table, stupefied with liquor. By day he paced the bluff with restless steps and worn face. Before him, half a league distant, was the land from which he was expatriate, and over it, as over many a passing sail, fluttered triumphant that flag which he had sought to dishonor. Below his feet, standing, like himself, with folded arms, was the strange rock configuration, staring with stony eyes at the American shore.

Then from the bluff to the bottle in the house on the bluff, and a written order to John Allan for more rum!

HE WAS pouring a drink that Spring afternoon when the door opened and sunlight flooded the room. He stopped, startled. No one had ever entered, unbidden, and no one had ever entered upon the bidding. With the bottle in one hand and the cup in the other, he faced the visitor.

It was Katharine Burleigh. Her face was white and wrought with great maternal sympathy. She came toward the almost petrified man, laid her hands upon his wrists, pressed them downward toward the table, and said: "No!"

For a moment he resisted, a kind of fury burning in his face. He hated sympathy as much as he feared the lack of it. Then he put the bottle and the cup upon the table. Before the woman's eyes he began to swallow hard and fast. He sank into a chair that was behind him and almost at her side, and covered his face with his left hand, resting his elbow on the table.

The woman's eyes filled with tears. He seemed so forlorn—so hopelessly, helplessly forlorn. She knew not what she wished to do, what she had come to do. She was without blame; she had merely been laboring under a peculiar fascination. Now that she knew how men regarded him, it was as if he had more in common with her, to whom a cold man had become almost a hated enemy. Womanly sympathy had her in its grasp to the exclusion of any more subtle emotion.

Her next action was maternal impulse. She did a simple, almost ludicrous, thing; but it was mighty in its potency. From her bosom she drew a small package and unfolded a pair of woolen wristlets.

"The Spring days are raw," she said. "I knitted them for you."

The hand still covered his face, but now his shoulders moved convulsively. It was the first time she had seen a man weep.

"Don't! Don't!" she pleaded.

Arnold dashed his hand over his eyes and stood up erect, the tears staining a defiant face. But his strength was reasserted too late. The woman put her brown head in her arms and wept unrestrainedly.

A glow entered Arnold's eyes. The knitted things on the table, and the woman's heart, spread before him in tears. She was his at last!

At last? Had he indeed waited for this end? While he accepted her sympathy and cheer, had he ever thought to win her, capture her, possess her? He did not know. He was not sure. But now——

She was his. He had but to reach out his arms—and he reached them; and take her—he paused. The arms were spread over her shoulders, but untouching.

Why not? Why not? He was an outlaw on one side of the line, outcast on the other. What mattered one more offense against honor—one more added to the list? Would men respect him more if he refrained? Could men despise him more if he yielded?

The hands remained poised over Katharine Burleigh. The woman's sobbing had ceased. She looked up, and in her face was involuntary resignation—submission to the line of least resistance. He saw the white flag, and every drop of blood in his liquor-fired veins burned with nervous yearning. For five seconds they looked into each other's eyes. Then Arnold's hands moved, not to her, but to his own hungry orbs. He tried to dash away the thought that burned in them.

For the last time the heritage of birth triumphed. He turned to the door, which he flung wide open.

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"Go, Katharine!" he pleaded. "Go, Mrs. Burleigh! For God's sake—go!"

Scarce understanding, respecting him more, but frightened by his vehemence, gesture and look, she stole out and down the trail to the woods behind the bluff.

When she was gone, Arnold shut the door and swallowed the drink which she had put from his hand.

III

THE land dispute had reached the critical stage. John Burleigh suddenly "broke his colors like a —— pirate who has been cruising with canvas over his gunports!" as the Admiral said. Burleigh had occupied the land for twenty years without paying even a peppercorn rent, and he and the Admiral were now going to law upon the question of royal patent versus possession.

When the fiery Admiral sailed for Nova Scotia in H. M. A. S. *Victory*—His Majesty's *Admiral's* Ship—armed with two cohorns and two swivels, it was Colonel Allan who chucklingly remarked that it was a good thing John Burleigh had twelve hours' start. "The Admiral would ha' settled the question with a broadside!"

One day while the contestants were away, the Colonel invited one of the Admiral's lads into his accounting-room. He was pouring a bottle of ginger-pop for the boy when he stopped short, in the manner of one who is arrested by the speech of some person unseen. From the vicinity of the rum counter came the voice of Jack Pitch, an old John Paul Jones man, a present 'longshore inebriate.

"It's what the traitor desarves, plague take 'im!" Pitch was saying. "Swing him to the gallows, says I! Who's to prove he didn't sneak over the strait hisself to scratch his feet on American sile onct more? It's only three strokes of an oar, an' if the night's thick, 'twill seem all the more like he put foot on the wrong side of the line."

John Allan laid down the bottle and appeared in the doorway.

"Look ye here, Jack Pitch," said he, "that's none of my business and don't talk about it here, if for no other reason than you're meddling with something too big for bigger men."

"Plague take ye, Colonel!" protested Pitch. "I didn't say nothin'."

"You said enough. No more!" said Allan, returning to the pop-bottle and the boy.

That was all for several days. Then again John Allan, figuring his accounts, overheard loose tongues in the store. This time he did not appear. He listened without qualm, having delivered his warning. John Allan decided that he would break this egg before it could be hatched, not so much for the peace of Arnold as for the peace of two nations.

He almost forgot about the matter, however, when the *Victory* returned from Nova Scotia, and the island was plunged into excitement over the thundercloud on the Admiral's brow—a cloud that told its own story. John Burleigh had won. The "encroacher," as the old spitfire branded Burleigh, was still at sea, which did not alter the fact that a large section of the island had slipped from the Admiral's grasp, despite the royal grant for valorous services rendered.

It was the idea of comforting the proud old man, of diverting him from the novelty of defeat, that recalled the Arnold plot to Allan's mind. He went to the Admiralty—the "manor-house"—and found the aged salt sunk in a chair in his "cabin aft," drowning wrath in his favorite tipple, kallibogus.

"Admiral," said the Colonel bluntly, "there's a new trouble brewing on the island."

"Eh?" snorted the Admiral. "Show it to me! Damme, I'd like nothing better than to hang some scallywag!"

"It's the man on the bluff. I hear that several misguided patriots are coming over to-night to kidnap Arnold to the American shore, where, as you can guess, they will string him to the nearest limb."

The news left the Admiral speechless for a minute. Then he burst out in wrath:

"Mizzen and main! This island's going to the dogs! I'm gone ten days and lawlessness is rampant, b'gad! You, too, ye swab!" he roared, turning upon the quartermaster, Aaron. "It's past sundown and ye've neither lowered the flag nor fired the gun! I'll see your log to-morrow—damme, I will!"

"Aye, aye, sir," said the quartermaster. "It's wrote fair and square up to your coming."

"We'll see about that. In the meantime, fetch my pistols! My cocked hat! My

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sword! Lawlessness! Piracy! Mutiny! Hold on, ye galley-wasp! Where are ye bound? Heave to and keep cool! Keep cool, damme, *keep cool!*"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Now, then," said the Admiral, "take my orders. See the cook. Mess half an hour earlier. Not a word to a man 'tween decks.' Then buckle on hanger, take musket, ball and powder, and stand by for orders!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"You'll come with me, too, sir!" concluded the Admiral, turning to Colonel Allan.

Until dinner was served, the Admiral paced his "cabin aft," nursing his wrath with kallibogus and growling to himself. It was not that he cared a tarry gaskin for Benedict Arnold, but the Admiral was in his person the King's Majesty on this island. No "upstart rebel" should set foot on Campobello with hostile intent toward any person thereon, much as he might deserve hanging! Furthermore, Arnold had served Great Britain. Protection was the price to be paid, even if this night's work reopened the war.

War! It was no great flight of imagination. The American patriots proposed to kidnap no less a source of ill-feeling than Benedict Arnold. Once they got him on the American side they would hang him instanter. They would say they caught him on American soil, and there would be others as ready to swear that they did not. Ill-feeling was piling up quickly enough without this reopening of an old sore. It was the Admiral's duty to prevent it, for, aside from everything else, the success of such an exploit against Arnold's security on British soil would make England the laughing-stock of Europe.

In the middle of a silent dinner, the tolling of a ship's bell in the roads spoke of a fog. The sound and its significance pleased the Admiral in a grim way. Better that everything should conspire to the attempt upon Arnold than that it should hang fire, a constant menace to international peace.

HALF an hour after dinner the old sea-lion and his henchman sallied forth into the night. Both were armed, the Admiral with a sword and a pair of horse-pistols, Aaron Bunker as per orders.

They picked up John Allan at the store. The store, oddly enough when there was so much to gossip about, was desolate. Colonel Allan came unarmed.

Beyond the village the road to the Friar's Bluff was shrouded in darkness and fog. Such persons as the trio met seemed as willing as themselves to pass unrecognized. There was business afoot in which every man wished to participate without being compromised.

By and by the trio came to the bluff. They left the little path that led to Arnold's house and pushed through the trees until they came to the edge of the grassy clearing surrounding it and facing the Lubec shore.

"Easy, lads!" cautioned a voice somewhere in the fog.

The Admiral laid a hand on John Allan's arm.

"They're here already!" he whispered. "Keep still!"

The old martinet had no intention of interfering until there was something to interfere with. He was too wise a veteran to fire a premature shot that would assuredly echo from London to Philadelphia.

The Arnold house stood in the middle of the clearing. A single window was alight, and at intervals a shadow crossed it. Suddenly the shadow paused and waved an arm vehemently.

"Admiral," whispered John Allan, "there's somebody with him, or I'm blind!"

Before the Admiral could say anything, five or six figures stole out of the woods into the clearing, out of the fog into the halo of that single light from the window.

There came the sound of a loud tattoo. The shadow appeared in the window. Its face—the face of Arnold, perfectly silhouetted against the blind—looked toward the door. Again the tattoo, this time louder and with an insistent sharpness.

The shadow moved. The door was flung wide open. In the portals, backed by a flood of light from within, stood Benedict Arnold. In each of his hands was a leveled and cocked pistol, and at his side swung his dishonored sword. His body was erect, his chin raised, and he looked every inch a soldier.

"Gentlemen," said he ironically, "I am honored. I feared I never should have visitors. Will you enter?"

He had been warned. The patriots were frustrated. To risk a shot from one of those

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steady pistols and the fall of even one of their number would be proof of the attempt having been made on British soil.

One by one the conspirators drifted away into the fog, and presently the sound of oars told of their departure for the American side.

But the Admiral, John Allan and Aaron Bunker never stirred from their hiding-place. There was nothing now to be done, except to learn the identity of the person who had warned the traitor.

In about fifteen minutes the door again opened. A woman appeared, her hand in Arnold's, but apparently unwilling to stay.

"Mizzen and main!" whispered the Admiral. "It's the encroacher's wife!"

Arnold bent and kissed the hand that sought release from his.

"For my life I thank you," they heard him say.

"Yes, yes—but let me go!" she pleaded. "I will be missed. They will know 'twas I——"

Then the man and the woman stood petrified in the shaft of light that came from the open doorway. Out of the fog a tall, heavy figure had stepped into the halo.

John Burleigh's thumbs were stuck idly in his belt, but on his white, bony face was an expression of sullen misery. He commanded them back into the house with a jerk of his bearded chin. The man and the woman obeyed, almost mechanically. Burleigh stepped in after them and slammed the door behind all three.

"Come away, Allan! Come away, Aaron!" said the Admiral, out in the mysterious, whispering fog. "There's a matter of encroachment that don't concern me!"

IV

WHAT happened in the house on the bluff that night none besides the three persons directly involved ever knew. Had the Admiral and John Allan and the quartermaster lingered in the bushes, they might have gained at least a hint from the shadow-show which was presently enacted on the window-blind.

Burleigh, Arnold and the wife were within the house for some time. At first there was silence; then a single, steady voice speaking in low, slow, measured tones. Presently there came other voices — the voices of a man denying, of a woman protesting and pleading, and of the first speaker condemning.

Toward the end there was a long quiet. A watcher without might have seen, silhouetted against the blind, a great square figure accepting the woman's hand and refusing the man's. The curtain of the shadow-show fell upon the big man's arm leveled with accusing, sentencing forefinger upon a figure with bowed head and rounded shoulders.

Then the door opened. John Burleigh led his wife out into the fog. He pointed to the trail down the ridge. Katharine walked ahead in silent obedience. Burleigh turned to the broken figure standing in the doorway.

"You understand," said he, in a final manner. "You will find my boat in Meadowbrook Cove. You will find the oars in the lumber-shack. If you are gone before sunrise, I promise to bear you no ill will. If not, your chances are your own, sir!"

The herculean man stuck his thumbs back in his belt and went down the trail after his wife. There was bitterness in his heart, but the cup was not without its drop of salutary medicine. He knew that Katharine was innocent, and the conviction brought with it a revelation of the woman's heart and its needs. Although he could not dissect the feeling, and did not try to, Burleigh suddenly shared, in some degree, Katharine's pity and sympathy for the man. On the whole, Burleigh was troubled, but he was satisfied.

It was one of the tense situations in life which barely fall short of tragedy. There was no stain upon Katharine's honor; no blood upon Burleigh's big hands; and the unhappy star of Benedict Arnold had yet a way to travel.

TWO days later, having weighed the whole matter in his slow-brained, deliberate manner; having reflected upon Katharine's loneliness and hungry womanhood, and upon his own aloofness when she needed a guiding hand and heart, John Burleigh decided against himself and for his wife. As Katharine bent over the baby, he shyly kissed the back of her neck. It was the nearest to demonstration that he could come. She turned with a sob of relief, and in the next ten seconds the past was wiped out and the future cleared.

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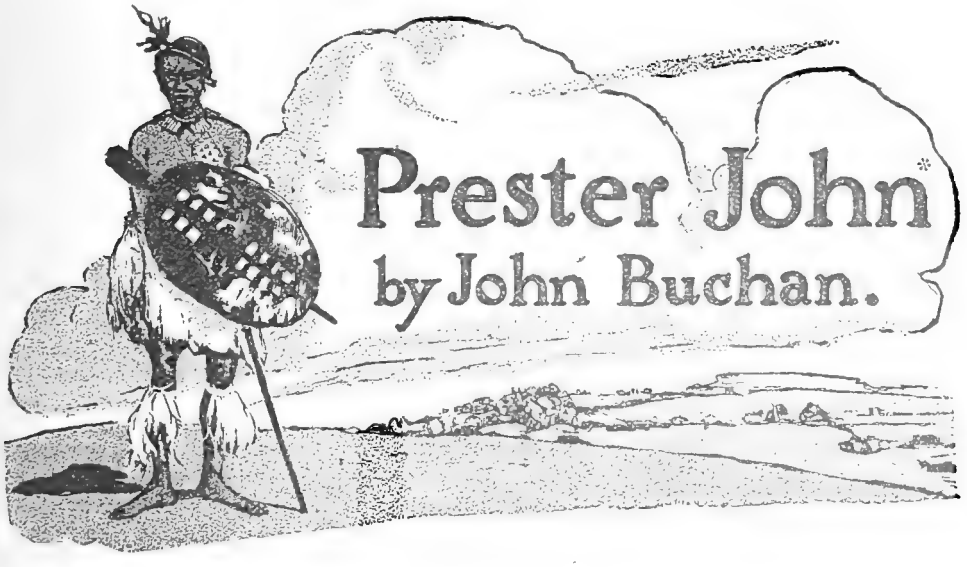
But when the dawn came after that dark night on the bluff, Burleigh, still with his thumbs stuck in his belt, was on the trail to Meadowbrook Cove. Before him at intervals he saw the imprint of a man's foot, and once he found the remnants of a smashed bottle at the base of a stout spruce.

When he arrived at the cove the boat was gone. He judged the time of its departure by the drop of the tide from the keel-cut in the sand. He climbed the hill behind the cove and scanned the sea to the north.

In the distance, rounding the northern end of the island, was a dark speck. Burleigh watched it as the sun came up. It moved to the west and seemed to drift a while in the American waters just across the line. Then again it moved northward, heading apparently for Deer Island—British soil.



SYNOPSIS: David Crawfurd and two other lads surprise in a semi-pagan incantation a black man, the Rev. John Laputa, who has come to the Scotch village as a wandering Christian missionary. At nineteen, Crawfurd, on his way to South Africa, as trade-agent, again meets Laputa, in company with Henriques, a Portuguese. In Africa he gets wind of a native uprising headed by Laputa, who claims descent from the great African emperor, Prester John, and holds the necklace called the Sacred Snake. Arcoll, of the British Secret Service, arrives with measures against the uprising. Crawfurd learns the plans of Laputa and Henriques, sends word by his dog, Colin, to Arcoll, and gains entrance to the natives' secret cave in the Rooirand, sees Laputa ordained King with the Necklace, but is discovered. The English ambush the native column; Henriques, really a traitor to both sides, seizes the priceless Necklace, killing the priest in charge, and Crawfurd, knocking him down, escapes with the Necklace in the confusion. After a terrible journey on foot, joined again by his dog, he meets natives warned of his coming by native mental-telepathy.

CHAPTER XXI

MORNING IN THE BERG

I WAS perhaps half a mile the nearer to the glen, and was likely to get there first. And after that? I could see the track winding by the waterside and then crossing a hill-shoulder which diverted the stream. It was a road a man could scarcely ride, and a tired man would have a hard job to climb. I do not think that I had any hope. I saw myself caught and carried off to Laputa, who must now be close on the rendezvous at Inanda's Kraal. I had no weapon to make a fight for it. My foemen were many and untired. It must be only a matter of minutes till I was in their hands.

More in a dogged fury of disappointment than with any hope of escape I forced my sore legs up the glen. Ten minutes ago I had been exulting in the glories of the morning, and now the sun was not less bright or

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the colors less fair, but the heart had gone out of the spectator. I could plod along, but to save my life I could not have hurried. Any healthy savage could have caught me in a hundred yards.

Soon I left the stream and climbed up on the shoulder, where the road was not much better than a precipice. Every step was a weariness. I could hardly drag one foot after the other, and my heart was beating like the fanners of a mill. I had spasms of acute sickness, and it took all my resolution to keep me from lying down by the roadside.

At last I was at the top of the shoulder and could look back. There was no sign of anybody on the road so far as I could see. Could I have escaped them? Before me, I remember, there stretched the upper glen, a green, cup-shaped hollow with the sides scarred by ravines. There was a high waterfall in one of them, which was white as snow against the red rocks. My wits must have been shaky, for I took the fall for a snow-drift, and wondered sillily why the Berg had grown so Alpine.

A faint spasm of hope took me into that green cup. It was like a water-meadow at home, such a place as I had often in boyhood searched for moss-cheepers' and corn-crakes' eggs. Birds were crying round me as I broke this solitude, and one small buck—a *klip-springer*—rose from my feet and dashed up one of the gullies. Before me was a green wall with the sky blue above it; beyond it safety, but as my sweat-dimmed eyes looked at it I knew I could never reach it.

Then I saw my pursuers. High up on the left side and rounding the rim of the cup were little black figures. They had not followed my trail, but, certain of my purpose, had gone forward to intercept me. I remember feeling a puny weakling compared with these lusty natives who could make such good going in steep mountains. They were certainly no men of the plains, but hillmen, probably some remnants of old Machudi's tribe, who still squatted in the glen. Machudi was a blackguard chief whom the Boers long ago smashed in one of their native wars. A Boer farmer on the plateau had his skull, and used to drink whisky out of it when he was merry.

THE sight of the pursuit was the last straw. I gave up hope, and my intentions were narrowed to one frantic desire—to hide the jewels. Patriotism, which I had almost forgotten, flickered up in the crisis. At any rate Laputa should not have the Snake! If he drove out the white man, he should not clasp the Prester's rubies on his great neck!

There was no cover in that green cup, so I turned up the ravine on the right side. The enemy were on the left and in front, and in the gully I might find a pot-hole to bury the necklet in. At first I could not find what I sought. Still I plodded on, helping myself with a hand on Colin's back, for my legs were numb with fatigue.

By and by the gully narrowed, and I came to a little fall, and up this I climbed into a network of tiny cascades. Over one pool hung a dead tree-fern, and a bay from it ran into a hole of the rock. I slipped the jewels far into the hole, where they lay on the firm sand, showing odd lights through the dim blue water. Then I scrambled down again and dropped limply on the shingle and waited, for I had suddenly conceived a plan.

As my breath came back to me my wits came back from their wandering. These men were not there to kill me, but to capture me. They could know nothing of the jewels, for Laputa would never have dared to make the loss of the Sacred Snake public. Therefore they would not suspect what I had done, and would simply lead me to Laputa at Inanda's Kraal. I began to see the glimmerings of a plan for saving my life and, by God's grace, for saving my country from the horrors of rebellion. Anyhow, the choice lay between certain death and the slender chance of life, and it was easy to decide.

I lay on my side, luxuriating in being still, and slowly a sort of vigor crept back into my limbs. Perhaps a half-hour of rest was given me, before, on the lip of the gully, I saw figures appear. Looking down I saw several men, who had come across from the opposite side of the valley, scrambling up the stream. I got to my feet, with Colin bristling beside me, and awaited them with the stiffest face I could muster.

As I expected, they were Machudi's men. I recognized them by the red ocher in their hair and by their copper-wire necklets. Big fellows they were, long-legged and deep in the chest, the true breed of mountaineers. I admired their light tread on the slippery rock. It was hopeless to think of evading such men in their own hills!

The men from the side joined the men in front, and they stood looking at me from

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about twelve yards off. They were armed only with *knobkerries*, and very clearly were no part of Laputa's army. This made their errand plain to me.

"HALT!" I said in Kaffir as one of them made a hesitating step to advance. "Who are you and what do you seek?"

There was no answer, but they looked at me curiously. Then one made a motion with his stick. Colin gave a growl, and would have been on him if I had not kept a hand on his collar. The rash man drew back, and all stood stiff and perplexed.

"Keep your hands by your side," I said, "or the dog, who has a devil, will devour you. One of you speak for the rest, and tell me your purpose."

For a moment I had a wild notion that they might be friends, some of Arcoll's scouts, and out to help me. But the first words shattered the fancy.

"We are sent by Inkulu," the biggest of them said. "He bade us bring you to him."

"And what if I refuse to go?"

"Then, *baas*, we must take you to him. We are under the vow of the Snake."

"Vow of fiddlestick!" I cried. "Who do you think is the bigger chief, the Inkulu or Retitswan? I tell you Retitswan is now driving Inkulu before him as a wind drives rotten leaves! It will be well for you, men of Machudi, to make peace with Retitswan and take me to him on the Berg. If you bring me to him, I and he will reward you; but if you do Inkulu's bidding you will soon be hunted like a buck out of your hills!"

They grinned at one another, but I could see that my words had no effect. Laputa had done his business too well.

The spokesman shrugged his shoulders in the way the Kaffirs have.

"We wish you no ill, *baas*, but we have been bidden to take you to Inkulu. We can not disobey the command of the Snake."

My weakness was coming on me again, and I could talk no more. I sat down plump on the ground, almost falling into the pool. "Take me to Inkulu," I stammered with a dry throat, "I do not fear him." And I rolled half-fainting on my back.

These clansmen of Machudi were decent fellows. One of them had some Kaffir beer in a calabash, which he gave me to drink. The stuff was thin and sickly, but the fermentation in it did me good. I had the sense to remember my need of sleep. "The day is young," I said, "and I have come far. I ask to be allowed to sleep for an hour."

The men made no difficulty, and with my head between Colin's paws I slipped into dreamless slumber.

WHEN they wakened me the sun was beginning to climb the sky. I judged it to be about eight o'clock. They had made a little fire and roasted mealies. Some of the food they gave me, and I ate it thankfully. I was feeling better, and I think a pipe would have almost completed my cure.

But when I stood up I found that I was worse than I had thought. The truth is, I was leg-weary, which you often see in horses, but rarely in men. What the proper explanation is I do not know, but the muscles simply refuse to answer the direction of the will. I found my legs sprawling like a child's who is learning to walk.

"If you want me to go to the Inkulu, you must carry me," I said, as I dropped once more on the ground.

The men nodded and set to work to make a kind of litter out of their *knobkerries* and some odd ropes they carried. As they worked and chattered I looked idly at the left bank of the ravine—that is, the left as you ascend it. Some of Machudi's men had come down there, and though the place looked sheer and perilous, I saw how they had managed it. I followed out bit by bit the track upwards, not with any thought of escape, but merely to keep my mind under control. The right road was from the foot of the pool up a long shelf to a clump of juniper. Then there was an easy chimney; then a piece of good hand-and-foot climbing, and, last, another ledge which led by an easy gradient to the top. I figured all this out as I have heard a condemned man will count the windows of the houses on his way to the scaffold.

Presently the litter was ready, and the men made signs to me to get into it. They carried me down the ravine, and up the Machudi burn to the green walls at its head. I admired their bodily fitness, for they bore me up these steep slopes with never a halt, zigzagging in the proper style of mountain transport. In less than an hour we had topped the ridge, and the plateau was before me.

Far away I saw smoke rising from what

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should be the village of the Iron Kranz. It was the country of my own people, and it behooved my captors to go cautiously. They were old hands at veld-craft, and it was wonderful the way in which they kept out of sight even on the bare ridges. Arcoll could have taught them nothing in the art of scouting. At an incredible pace they hurried me along, now in a meadow by a stream-side, now through a patch of forest, and now skirting a green shoulder of hill.

Once they clapped down suddenly and crawled into the lee of some thick bracken. Then very quietly they tied my hands and feet, and, not ungently, wound a dirty length of cotton over my mouth. Colin was meantime held tight and muzzled with a kind of bag strapped over his head. To get this over his snapping jaws took the whole strength of the party. I guessed that we were nearing the highroad which runs from the plateau down the Great Letaba valley to the mining township of Wesselsburg away out on the plain. The police patrols must be out on this road, and there was risk in crossing. Sure enough, I seemed to catch a jingle of bridles as if from some company of men riding in haste.

We lay still for a little till the scouts came back and reported the coast clear. Then we made a dart for the road, crossed it, and got into cover on the other side, where the ground sloped down to the Letaba glen. I noticed in crossing that the dust of the highway was thick with the marks of shod horses. I was very near and yet very far from my own people.

Once in the rocky gorge of the Letaba we advanced with less care. We scrambled up a steep side gorge and came on to the small plateau from which the Cloud Mountains rise. After that I was so tired that I drowsed away, heedless of the bumping of the litter. We went up and up, and when I next opened my eyes we had gone through a pass into a hollow of the hills. There was a flat space a mile or two square, and all round it stern black ramparts of rock. This must be Inanda's Kraal, a strong place if ever one existed, for a few men could defend all the approaches. Considering that I had warned Arcoll of this rendezvous, I marveled that no attempt had been made to hold the entrance. The place was impregnable unless guns were brought up to the heights. I remember thinking of a story I had heard—how in the war Beyers took his guns into the Volksberg and thereby saved them from our troops. Could Arcoll be meditating the same exploit?

Suddenly I heard the sound of loud voices, and my litter was dropped roughly on the ground. I woke to clear consciousness in the midst of pandemonium.

CHAPTER XXII

INANDA'S KRAAL

THE Vow was at an end. In place of the silent army of yesterday a mob of maddened savages surged around me. They were chanting a wild song and brandishing spears and rifles to its accompaniment. From their blood-shot eyes stared the lust of blood, the fury of conquest and all the aboriginal passions on which Laputa had laid his spell. In my mind ran a fragment from Laputa's prayer in the cave about the "Terrible Ones." Machudi's men —stout fellows, they held their ground as long as they could—were swept out of the way, and the wave of black savagery seemed to close over my head.

I thought my last moment had come. Certainly it had, but for Colin. The bag had been taken from his head, and the fellow of Machudi's had dropped the rope round his collar. In a red fury of wrath the dog leaped at my enemies. Though every man of them was fully armed, they fell back, for I have noticed always that Kaffirs are mortally afraid of a white man's dog. Colin had the sense to keep beside me. Growling like a thunderstorm, he held the ring around my litter.

The breathing-space would not have lasted long, but it gave me time to get to my feet. My wrists and feet had been unbound long before, and the rest had cured my legweariness. I stood up in that fierce circle with the clear knowledge that my life hung by a hair.

"Take me to Inkulu!" I cried. "Dogs and fools, would you despise his orders? If one hair of my head is hurt, he will flay you alive! Show me the way to him, and clear out of it!"

I dare say there was a break in my voice, for I was dismally frightened, but there must have been sufficient authority to get me a hearing. Machudi's men closed up behind me, and repeated my words with flourishes and gestures. But still the circle held. No

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man came nearer me, but none moved so as to give me a passage.

Then I screwed up my courage and did the only thing possible—I walked straight into the circle, knowing well that I was running no light risk. My courage, as I have already explained, is of little use unless I am doing something. I could not endure another minute of sitting still with those fierce eyes on me.

The circle gave way. Sullenly they made a road for me, closing up behind on my guards, so that Machudi's men were swallowed in the mob. Alone I stalked forward with all that huge, yelling crowd behind me.

I had not far to go. Inanda's Kraal was a cluster of *kyas* and *rondavels*, shaped in a half-moon with a flat space between the houses where grew a big merula-tree. All around was a medley of little fires with men squatted beside them. Here and there a party had finished their meal, and were swaggering about with a great shouting. The mob into which I had fallen was of this sort, and I saw others within the confines of the camp. But around the merula-tree there was a gathering of chiefs, if I could judge by the comparative quiet and dignity of the men who sat in rows on the ground. A few were standing, and among them I caught sight of Laputa's tall figure. I strode toward it, wondering whether the chiefs would let me pass.

The hubbub of my volunteer attendants brought the eyes of the company round to me. In a second, it seemed, every man was on his feet. I could only pray that Laputa would get to me before his friends had time to spear me. I remember I fixed my eyes on a spur of hill beyond the *kraal* and walked on with the best resolution I could find. Already I felt in my breast some of the long, thin *assegais* of Umbooni's men.

BUT Laputa did not intend that I should be butchered. A word from him brought his company into order, and the next thing I knew I was facing him, where he stood in front of the biggest *kya* with Henriques beside him, and some of the northern *indunas*. Henriques looked ghastly in the clear morning light, and he had a linen rag bound round his head and jaw, as if he suffered from toothache. His face was more livid, his eyes more bloodshot, and at the sight of me his hand went to his belt and his teeth snapped. But he held his peace, and it was Laputa who spoke. He looked straight through me, and addressed Machudi's men.

"You have brought back the prisoner. That is well, and your service will be remembered. Go to 'Mpofu's camp on the hill there, and you will be given food."

The men departed, and with them fell away the crowd which had followed me. I was left, very giddy and dazed, to confront Laputa and his chiefs. The whole scene was swimming before my eyes. I remember there was a clucking of hens from somewhere behind the *kraal*, which called up ridiculous memories. I was trying to remember the plan I had made in Machudi's glen. I kept saying to myself like a parrot: "The army can not know about the jewels. Laputa must keep this loss secret. I can get my life from him if I offer to give them back." It had sounded a good scheme three hours before, but with the man's hard face before me it seemed a frail peg to hang my life on.

Laputa's eye fell on me, a clear, searching eye with a question in it. There was something he was trying to say to me which he dared not put into words. I guessed what the something was, for I saw his glance run over my shirt and my empty pockets.

"You have made little by your treachery," he said. "Fool! did you think to escape me? I could bring you back from the ends of the earth!"

"There was no treachery," I replied. "Do you blame a prisoner for trying to escape? When shooting began I found myself free, and I took the road for home. Ask Machudi's men and they will tell you that I came quietly with them, when I saw that the game was up."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It matters very little what you did. You are here now. Tie him up and put him in my *kya*," he said to the body-guard. "I have something to say to him before he dies."

As the men laid hands on me I saw the exultant grin on Henriques's face. It was more than I could endure.

"Stop!" I said. "You talk of traitors, Mr. Laputa. There is the biggest and blackest at your elbow! That man sent word to Arcoll about your crossing at Dupree's Drift. At our *outspan* at noon yesterday he came to me and offered me my liberty if I would help him. He told me he was a spy, and I flung his offer in his face. It was he

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who shot the Keeper of the Snake by the riverside, and would have stolen the Snake, if I had not broken his head. You call me a traitor, and you let that thing live, though he has killed your Priest and betrayed your plans! Kill me if you like, but, by ——, let him die first!"

I do not know how the others took the revelation, for my eyes were only for the Portuguese. He made a step toward me, his hands twitching by his sides.

"You lie!" he screamed in that queer broken voice which much fever gives. "It was this English hound that killed the Keeper, and felled me when I tried to save him! The man who insults my honor is dead!" And he plucked from his belt a pistol.

A good shot does not miss at two yards. I was never nearer my end than in that fraction of time while the weapon came up to the aim. It was scarcely a second, but it was enough for Colin. The dog had kept my side, and had stood docilely by me while Laputa spoke. The truth is, he must have been as tired as I was. As the Kaffirs approached to lay hands on me he had growled menacingly, but when I spoke again he had stopped. Henriques' voice had convinced him of a more urgent danger and, so soon as the trigger-hand of the Portuguese rose, the dog sprang. The bullet went wide, and the next moment dog and man were struggling on the ground.

A dozen hands held me from going to Colin's aid, but, oddly enough, no one stepped forward to help Henriques! The ruffian kept his head, and though the dog's teeth were in his shoulder, he managed to get his right hand free. I saw what would happen, and yelled madly in my apprehension. The yellow wrist curved and the pistol-barrel was pressed below the dog's shoulder. Thrice he fired, and the grip relaxed and Colin rolled over limply, fragments of shirt still hanging from his jaw. The Portuguese rose slowly, with his hand to his head, and a thin stream of blood dripping from his shoulder.

As I saw the faithful eyes glazing in death, and knew that I had lost the best of all comrades, I went clean berserk mad. The cluster of men round me, who had been staring open-eyed at the fight, were swept aside like reeds. I went straight for the Portuguese, determined that, pistol or no pistol, I should serve him as he had served my dog!

For my years I was a well-set-up lad, long in the arms and deep in the chest. But I had not yet come to my full strength, and in any case I could not hope to fight the whole of Laputa's army. I was flung back and forward like a shuttlecock. They played some kind of game with me, and I could hear the idiotic Kaffir laughter.

It was blind man's buff, so far as I was concerned, for I was blind with fury. I struck out wildly left and right, beating the air often, but sometimes getting a solid blow on hard blue flesh. I was soundly beaten myself, pricked with spears, and made to caper for savage sport. Suddenly I saw Laputa before me, and hurled myself madly at his chest. Some one gave me a clout on the head, and my senses fled.

CHAPTER XXIII

A BARGAIN

WHEN I came to myself I was lying on a heap of mealie-stalks in a dark room. I had a desperate headache and horrid nausea, which made me fall back as soon as I tried to raise myself.

A voice came out of the darkness, as I stirred—a voice speaking English.

"Are you awake, Mr. Storekeeper?"

The voice was Laputa's, but I could not see him. The room was pitch-dark, except for a long ray of sunlight on the floor.

"I'm awake," I said. "What do you want with me?"

Some one stepped out of the gloom and sat down near me. A naked black foot broke the belt of light on the floor.

"For God's sake get me a drink!" I murmured.

The figure rose and fetched a pannikin of water from a pail. I could hear the cool trickle of the drops on the metal. A hand put the dish to my mouth, and I drank water with a strong dash of spirits. This brought back my nausea, and I collapsed on the maelie-stalks till the fit passed.

Again the voice spoke, this time from close at hand.

"You are paying the penalty of being a fool, Mr. Storekeeper. You are young to die, but folly is common in youth. In an hour you will regret that you did not listen to my advice at Umvelos'."

I clawed at my wits and strove to realize what he was saying. He spoke of death within an hour. If it only came sharp and sudden, I did not mind greatly. The plan I

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had made had slipped utterly out of my mind. My body was so wretched that I asked only for rest. I was very light-headed and foolish at that moment.

"Kill me if you like," I whispered. "Some day you will pay dearly for it all. But for God's sake go away and leave me alone!"

Laputa laughed. It was a horrid sound in the darkness.

"You are brave, Mr. Storekeeper, but I have seen a brave man's courage ebb very fast when he saw the death which I have arranged for you. Would you like to hear something of it by way of preparation?"

In a low, gentle voice he began to tell me mysteries of awful cruelty. At first I scarcely heard him, but as he went on my brain seemed to wake from its lethargy. I listened with freezing blood. Not in my wildest nightmares had I imagined such a fate. Then, despite myself, a cry broke from me.

"It interests you?" Laputa asked. "I could tell you more, but something should be left to the fancy. Yours should be an active one," and his hand gripped my shaking wrist and felt my pulse.

"Henriques will see that the truth does not fall short of my forecast," he went on, "for I have appointed Henriques your executioner!"

The name brought my senses back to me.

"Kill me," I said, "but for God's sake kill Henriques too! If you did justice you would let me go and roast the Portuguese alive. But for me the Snake would be over the Lebombo by this time in Henriques' pocket!"

"But it is not, my friend. It was stolen by a storekeeper, who will shortly be wishing he had died in his mother's womb!"

My plan was slowly coming back to me.

"If you value Prester John's collar you will save my life. What will your rising be without the Snake? Would they follow you a yard if they suspected you had lost it?"

"So you would threaten me?" Laputa said very gently. Then in a burst of wrath he shouted: "They will follow me to hell for my own sake! Imbecile! do you think my power is built on a trinket? When you are in your grave, I will be ruling a hundred millions from the proudest throne on earth!"

HE SPRANG to his feet and pulled back a shutter of the window, letting a flood of light into the hut. In that light I saw that he had in his hands the ivory box which had contained the collar.

"I will carry the casket through the wars," he cried, "and if I choose never to open it, who will gainsay me? You besotted fool, to think that any theft of yours could hinder my destiny!"

He was the blustering savage again, and I preferred him in the part. All that he said might be true, but I thought I could detect in his voice a keen regret, and in his air a touch of disquiet. The man was a fanatic, and, like all fanatics, had his superstitions.

"Yes," I said, "but when you mount the throne you speak of, it would be a pity not to have the rubies on your neck after all your talk in the Cave!"

I thought he would have throttled me. He glowered down at me with murder in his eyes. Then he dashed the casket on the floor with such violence that it broke into fragments.

"Give me back the Ndhlondhlo!" he cried, like a petted child. "Give me back the Collar of John!"

This was the moment I had been waiting for.

"Now see here, Mr. Laputa," I said, "I am going to talk business. Before you started this rising you were a civilized man with a good education. Well, just remember that education for a minute, and look at the matter in a sensible light. I'm not like the Portuguese. I don't want to steal your rubies. I swear to God that what I have told you is true! Henriques killed the Priest, and would have bagged the jewels if I had not laid him out. I ran away, because I was going to be killed to-day, and I took the Collar to keep it out of Henriques' hands. I tell you I would never have shot the old man myself. Very well, what happened? Your men overtook me and I had no choice but to surrender. Before they reached me I hid the collar in a place I know of.

"Now, I am going to make you a fair and square business proposition. You may be able to get on without the Snake, but I can see you want it back. I am in a tight place and want nothing so much as my life. I offer to trade with you. Give me my life, and I will take you to the place and put the jewels in your hand. Otherwise, you may kill me, but you will never see the Collar of John again."

I still think that was a pretty bold speech for a man to make in a predicament like mine, but it had its effect. Laputa ceased

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to be the barbarian king, and talked like a civilized man.

"That is, as you call it, a business proposition. But supposing I refuse it? Supposing I take measures here in this *kraal*—to make you speak, and then send for the jewels?"

"There are several objections," I said, quite cheerfully, for I felt that I was gaining ground. "One is that I could not explain to any mortal soul how to find the Collar. I know where it is, but I could not impart the knowledge. Another is that the country between here and Machudi's is not very healthy for your people. Arcoll's men are all over it, and you can not have a collection of search-parties rummaging about in the glen for long. Last and most important, if you send any one for the jewels, you confess their loss. No, Mr. Laputa, if you want them back, you must go yourself and take me with you."

HE STOOD silent for a little with his brows knit in thought. Then he opened the door and went out. I guessed that he had gone to discover from his scouts the state of the country between Inanda's Kraal and Machudi's glen. Hope had come back to me and I sat among the mealie-stalks trying to plan the future. If he made a bargain I believed he would keep it.

Once set free at the head of Machudi's, I should be within an hour or two of Arcoll's posts. So far I had done nothing for the cause. My message had been made useless by Henriques' treachery, and I had stolen the Snake only to restore it. But if I got off with my life, there would be work for me to do in the Armageddon which I saw approaching.

Should I escape? I wondered. What would hinder Laputa from setting his men to follow me and seize me before I could get into safety? My only chance was that Arcoll might have been busy this day, and the countryside too full of his men to let Laputa's Kaffirs through. But if this was so, Laputa and I should be stopped, and then Laputa would certainly kill me. I wished, and yet I did not wish, that Arcoll should hold all approaches. As I reflected, my first exhilaration died away. The scales were still heavily weighted against me.

Laputa returned, closing the door behind him.

"I will bargain with you on my own terms. You shall have your life, and in return you will take me to the place where you hid the Collar, and put it into my hands. I will ride there, and you will run beside me, tied to my saddle. If we are in danger from the white men, I will shoot you dead. Do you accept?"

"Yes," I said, scrambling to my feet and ruefully testing my shaky legs. "But if you want me to get to Machudi's you must go slowly, for I am nearly foundered."

Then he brought out a Bible and made me swear on it that I would do as I promised.

"Swear to me in turn," I said, "that you will do me no harm if I restore the jewels."

He swore, kissing the book like a witness in a police-court. I had forgotten that the man called himself a Christian.

"One thing more I ask," I said. "I want my dog decently buried."

"That has been already done," was the reply. "He was a brave animal, and my people honor bravery."

CHAPTER XXIV

I JOURNEY WITH LAPUTA

MY EYES were bandaged tight, and a thong was run round my right wrist and tied to Laputa's saddle-bow. I felt the glare of the afternoon sun on my head, and shins were continually barked by stones my and trees; but these were my only tidings of the outer world. By the sound of his paces Laputa was riding the *schimmel*, and if any one thinks it easy to go blindfold by a horse's side I hope he will soon have the experience.

For an hour or more I suffered this break-neck treatment. We were descending. Often I could hear the noise of falling streams and once was splashed through a mountain ford. Laputa was taking no risks, for he clearly had in mind the possibility of some accident which would set me free, and he had no desire to have me guiding Arcoll to his camp.

But as I stumbled and sprawled down these rocky tracks I was not thinking of Laputa's plans. My whole soul was filled with regret for Colin and rage against his murderer. After my first mad rush I had not thought about my dog. He was dead, but so would I be in an hour or two, and there was no cause to lament him.

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But at the first revival of hope my grief had returned. As they bandaged my eyes I was wishing that they would let me see his grave. As I followed beside Laputa I told myself that if ever I got free, when the war was over, I would go to Inanda's Kraal, find the grave and put a tombstone over it in memory of the dog that saved my life. I would also write that the man who shot him was killed on such and such a day at such and such a place by Colin's master.

I wondered why Laputa had not the wits to see the Portuguese's treachery, and to let me fight him. I did not care what were the weapons—knives or guns or naked fists —I would certainly kill him, and afterwards the Kaffirs could do as they pleased with me. Hot tears of rage and weakness wet the bandage on my eyes, and the sobs which came from me were not those of weariness alone.

At last we halted. Laputa got down and took off the bandage, and I found myself in one of the hill-meadows which lie among the foot-hills of the Wolksberg. Laputa let me sit on the ground for a minute or two to get my breath and rest my feet. "That was a rough road," he said. "You can take it easier now, for I have no wish to carry you." He patted the *schimmel*, and the beautiful creature turned his mild eyes on the pair of us. I wondered if he recognized his rider of two nights ago.

I HAD seen Laputa as the Christian minister, as the priest and king in the cave, and the leader of an army at Dupree's Drift, and, at the *kraal* we had left, as the savage with all self-control flung to the winds. I was now to see this amazing man in a further part. For he now became a friendly and rational companion. He kept his horse at an easy walk, and talked to me as if we were two friends out for a trip together. Perhaps he had talked thus to Arcoll, the half-caste who drove his Cape cart.

The wooded bluff above Machudi's glen showed far in front. He told me the story of the Machudi war, which I knew already, but he told it as a saga. There had been a stratagem by which one of the Boer leaders —a Grobelaar, I think—got some of his men into the enemy's camp by hiding in a captured forage-wagon.

"Like the Trojan horse," I said involuntarily.

"Yes," said my companion, "the same old device," and to my amazement he quoted some lines of Virgil.

"Do you understand Latin?" he asked.

I told him that I had some slight knowledge of the tongue, acquired at the University of Edinburgh. Laputa nodded. He mentioned the name of a professor and commented on his scholarship.

"Oh, man," I cried, "what in God's name are you doing in this business? You that are educated and have seen the world, what makes you try to put the clock back? You want to wipe out the civilization of a thousand years and turn us all into savages! It's the more shame to you, when you know better!"

"You misunderstand me," he said quietly. "It is because I have sucked civilization dry that I know the bitterness of the fruit. I want a simpler and better world, and I want that world for my own people. I am a Christian, and will you tell me that your civilization pays much attention to Christ? You call yourself a patriot. Will you not give me leave to be a patriot in turn?"

"If you are a Christian, what sort of Christianity is it to deluge the land with blood?"

"The best," he said. "The house must be swept and garnished before the man of the house can dwell in it. You have read history. Such a purging has descended on the Church at many times, and the world has awakened to a new hope. It is the same in all religions. The temples grow tawdry and foul and must be cleansed, and let me remind you the cleanser has always come out of the desert."

I had no answer, being too weak and forlorn to think; but I fastened on his patriotic plea.

"Where are the patriots in your following? They are all red Kaffirs, crying for blood and plunder! Supposing you were Oliver Cromwell—you could make nothing out of such a crew."

"They are my people," he said simply.

By this time we had forded the Great Letaba, and were making our way through the clumps of forest to the crown of the plateau. I noticed that Laputa kept well in cover, preferring the tangle of wooded undergrowth to the open spaces of the wood-bush meadows. As he talked his wary eyes were keeping a sharp lookout over the land-

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scape. I thrilled with the thought that my own folk were near at hand.

Once Laputa checked me with his hand as I was going to speak, and in silence we crossed the *kloof* of a little stream. After that we struck a long strip of forest, and he slackened his watch.

"If you fight for a great cause," I said, "why do you let a miscreant like Henriques have a hand in it? You must know that the man's only interest in you is the chance of loot. I am for you against Henriques, and I tell you plain that if you don't break the snake's back it will sting you."

Laputa looked at me with an odd, meditative look.

"You misunderstand again, Mr. Storekeeper. The Portuguese is what you call a 'mean white.' His only safety is among us. I am campaigner enough to know that my enemy who has a burning grievance against my other enemies is a good ally. You are too hard on Henriques. You and your friends have treated him as a Kaffir, and a Kaffir he is, in anything but Kaffir virtues. What makes you so anxious that Henriques should not betray me?"

"I'm not a mean white," I said, "and I will speak the truth. I hope in God's name to see you smashed, but I want it done by honest men and not by a yellow devil who has murdered my dog and my friends. Sooner or later you will find him out; and if he escapes you, and there's any justice in Heaven, he won't escape me!"

"Brave words," said Laputa with a laugh, and then in one second he became rigid in the saddle. After a moment he caught the sound of horses, and I caught it, too. The wood was thin and there was no room for retreat, while to recross the meadow would bring us clean into the open. He jumped from his horse, untied with amazing quickness the rope halter from its neck, and started to gag me by winding the thing round my jaw.

I had no time to protest that I would keep faith, and my right hand was tethered to his pommel. In the grip of these great arms I was helpless, and in a trice was standing dumb as a lamp-post, while Laputa, his left arm round both of mine, and his right hand over the *schimmel's* eyes, strained his ears like a sable antelope who has scented danger.

There was never a more brutal gagging. The rope crushed my nose and drove my lips down on my teeth, besides gripping my throat so that I could scarcely breathe. The pain was so great that I became sick and would have fallen but for Laputa. Happily I managed to get my teeth apart so that one coil slipped between and eased the pain of the jaws. But the rest was bad enough to make me bite frantically on the tow and I think in a little my sharp front teeth would have severed it.

All this discomfort prevented my seeing what happened. The wood, as I have said, was thin, and through the screen of leaves I had a confused impression of men and horses passing interminably. There can have been only a score at the most, but the moments drag if a cord is gripping your throat. When Laputa at length untied me, I had another fit of nausea and leaned helplessly against a tree.

LAPUTA listened till the sound of the horses had died away. Then silently he stole to the edge of the road, across, and into the thicker evergreen bush on the far side. At a pace which forced me to run hard, we climbed a steepish slope, till ahead of us we saw the bald green crown of the meadowland. I noticed that his face had grown dark and sullen again. He was in an enemy's country, and had the air of the hunted instead of the hunter. When I stopped he glowered at me, and once when I was all but overcome with fatigue he lifted his hand in a threat. Had he carried a *sjambok* it would have fallen on my back.

If he was nervous, so was I. The fact that I was out of the Kaffir country and in the land of my own folk was a kind of qualified liberty. At any moment I felt Providence might intervene to set me free. It was in the bond that Laputa should shoot me if we were attacked, but a pistol might miss. As far as my shaken wits would let me, I began to forecast the future. Once he got the jewels, my side of the bargain was complete. He had promised me my life, but there had been nothing said about my liberty, and I felt assured that Laputa would never allow one who had seen so much to get off to Arcoll with his tidings.

But back to that unhallowed *kraal* I was resolved I would not go. He was armed and I was helpless; he was strong and I was dizzy with weakness; he was mounted and I was on foot; it seemed a poor hope that I should get away. There was little chance

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from a wandering patrol, for I knew if we were followed I should have a bullet in my head, while Laputa got off on the *schimmel*. I must wait and bide events. At the worst a clean shot on the hillside in a race for life was better than the unknown mysteries of the *kraal*. I prayed earnestly to God to show me His mercy, for if any man was sore bested by the heathen it was I.

To my surprise Laputa chose to show himself on the green hill-shoulder. He looked toward the Wolksberg and raised his hands. It must have been some signal; I cast my eyes back on the road we had come and I thought I saw some figures a mile back on the edge of the Letaba gorge. Laputa was making sure of my return.

By this time it was about four in the afternoon and as heavenly weather as the heart of man could wish. We were now going at a good pace, and I found that my earlier weariness was growing less. I was being keyed up for some great crisis, for in my case the spirit acts direct on the body, and fatigue grows and ebbs with hope. I knew that my strength was not far from breaking-point, but I knew also that, so long as a chance was left me, I should have courage for a stroke.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FINDING OF THE COLLAR

BEFORE I realized where we were we had rounded the hill and were looking down on the green cup of the upper Machudi's glen. Far down, I remember, where the trees began, there was a cloud of smoke. Some Kaffir—or maybe Arcoll—had fired the forest.

Laputa bade me take the lead. I saw quite clearly the red *kloof* on the far side where the Collar was hid. To get there we might have ridden straight into the cup, but a providential instinct made me circle round the top till we were on the lip of the ravine. This was the road some of Machudi's men had taken, and unthinkingly I followed them. Twenty minutes' riding brought us to the place, and all the while I had no kind of plan of escape. I was in the hands of my Maker, watching like the Jews of old for a sign.

Laputa dismounted and looked down into the gorge. "There is no road there," I said. "We must go down to the foot and come up the stream-side. It would be better to leave your horse here."

He started down the cliff, which from above looks a sheer precipice. Then he seemed to agree with me, took the rope from the *schimmel's* neck, and knee-haltered his beast; and at that moment I had an inspiration.

With my wrist-rope in his hand he preceded me down the hill, till we got to the red screes at the foot of the *kloof*. Then under my guidance we turned up into the darkness of the gorge. As we entered I looked back, and saw figures coming over the edge of the green cup. Laputa's men, I guessed. What I had to do must be done quickly.

We climbed up the burn over the succession of little cataracts till we came to the flat space of shingle and the long pool where I had been taken that morning. The ashes of the fire which Machudi's men had made were plain on the rock. After that I had to climb a waterfall to get to the rock-pool where I had bestowed the rubies.

"You must take off that thong," I said. "I must climb to get the Collar. Cover me with a pistol if you like. I won't be out of sight."

Laputa undid the thong and set me free. From his belt he took a pistol, cocked it, and held it over his left hand. I had seen this way of shooting adopted by indifferent shots. This gave me a wild hope that he might not be much of a marksman.

It did not take me long to find the pool, close against the blackened stump of a tree-fern. I thrust in my hand, and gathered up the jewels from the cool sand. They came out glowing like living fires, and for a moment I thrilled with a sense of reverence. Surely these were no common stones which held in them the very heart of Hell! Clutching them tightly, I climbed down to Laputa.

At the sight of the Great Snake he gave a cry of rapture. Tearing it from me he held it at arm's length, his face lit with a passionate joy. He kissed it, he raised it to the sky, nay, he was on his knees before it! Once more he was the savage transported in the presence of his fetich.

He turned to me with a burning eye.

"Down on your knees," he cried, "and reverence the Ndhlondhlo!

"Down, you impious dog, and seek pardon for your sacrilege!"

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"I won't!" I said "I won't bow to any heathen idol!"

He pointed his pistol at me. "In a second I shoot where your head is now. Down, you fool, or perish!"

"You promised me my life," I said stubbornly, though heaven knows why I chose to act thus.

He dropped the pistol and flung himself on me. I was helpless as a baby in his hands. He forced me to the ground and rolled my face in the sand. Then he pulled me to my feet and tossed me backward, till I almost staggered into the pool. I saved myself, and staggered instead into the shallow at the foot of it, close under the ledge of the precipice.

THAT morning when Machudi's men were cooking breakfast I had figured out a route up the cliff. This route was now my hope of escape. Laputa had dropped his pistol, and the Collar had plunged him into an ecstasy of worship. Now, if ever, was my time. I must get on the shelf which ran sideways up the cliff and then scramble for dear life.

I pretended to be dazed and terrified.

"You promised me my life!" I whispered.

"Your life!" he cried. "Yes, you shall have your life, and before long you will pray for death!"

"But I saved the Collar," I pleaded. "Henriques would have stolen it. I brought it safe here, and now you have got it." Meantime I was pulling myself up on the shelf and loosening with one hand a boulder which overhung the pool.

"You have been repaid," he said savagely. "You will not die."

"But my life is no use without liberty," I said, working at the boulder till it lay loose in its niche.

He did not answer, being intent on examining the Collar to see whether it had suffered any harm.

"I hope it isn't scratched," I said. "Henriques trod on it when I hit him."

Laputa peered at the gems like a mother at a child who has had a fall. I saw my chance and took it. With a great heave I pulled the boulder down into the pool. It made a prodigious splash, sending a shower of spray over Laputa and the Collar. In cover of it I raced up the shelf, straining for the cover of the juniper tree.

A shot rang out and struck the rock above me. A second later I had reached the tree and was scrambling up the crack beyond it.

Laputa did not fire again. He may have distrusted his shooting or seen a better way of it. He dashed through the stream and ran up the shelf like a *klipspringer* after me. With my heart in my mouth I gathered my dregs of energy for the last struggle.

You know the nightmare when you are pursued by some awful terror and, though sick with fear, your legs have a strange numbness and you can not drag them in obedience to the will. Such was my feeling in the crack above the juniper tree. In truth I had passed the limits of my strength. Last night I had walked fifty miles, and all day I had borne the torments of a dreadful suspense. I had been bound and gagged and beaten till the force was out of my limbs. Also, and above all, I had had little food and I was dizzy with want of sleep. My feet seemed leaden, my hands had no more grip than putty. I do not know how I escaped falling into the pool, for my head was singing and my heart thumping in my throat. I seemed to feel Laputa's great hand every second clawing at my heels.

I HAD reason for my fears. He had entered the crack long before I reached the top, and his progress was twice as fast as mine. When I emerged on the topmost shelf he was scarcely a yard behind me. But an overhang checked his bulky figure and gave me a few seconds' grace. I needed it all, for these last steps on the shelf were the totterings of an old man. Only a desperate resolution and an extreme terror made me drag one foot after the other. Blindly I staggered on to the top of the ravine, and saw before me the *schimmel* grazing in the light of the westering sun.

I forced myself into a sort of drunken run and crawled into the saddle. Behind me, as I turned, I could see Laputa's shoulders rising over the edge. I had no time to cut the knee-halter, and the horse could not stir.

Then the miracle happened. When the rope had gagged me, my teeth must have nearly severed it at the place, and this Laputa had not noticed when he used it as a knee-halter. The shock of my entering the saddle made the *schimmel* fling up his head violently, and the rope snapped. I could

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not find the stirrups, but I dug my heels into his sides, and he leaped forward.

At the same moment Laputa began to shoot. It was a foolish move, for he might have caught me by running, since I had neither spurs nor whip, and the horse was hampered by the loose end of rope at his knee. In any case, being an indifferent shot, he should have aimed at the *schimmel*, not at me; but I suppose he wished to save his charger. One bullet sang past my chest; a second did my business for me. It passed over my shoulder, as I lay low in the saddle, and grazed the beast's right ear. This fair maddened him and, rope-end and all, he plunged into a wild gallop.

Other shots came, but they fell far short. I saw dimly a native or two—the men who had followed us—rush to intercept me, and I think a spear was flung. But in a flash we were past them, and their cries faded behind me. I found the bridle, reached for the stirrups, and galloped straight for the sunset and for freedom!

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW A MAN MAY SOMETIMES PUT HIS TRUST IN A HORSE

I HAD long passed the limit of my strength. I simply sat my horse's back in a silly glow of comfort, keeping a line for the dying sun, which I saw in a niche of the Iron Crown Mountain. Remember that I was little more than a lad and that I had faced death so often of late that my mind was all adrift.

The mood did not last long. I came back to earth with a shock, as the *schimmel* stumbled at the crossing of a stream. I saw that the darkness was fast falling, and with the sight panic returned to me. Behind me I seemed to hear the sound of pursuit. The noise was in my ears, but when I turned it ceased, and I saw only the bare dusky shoulders of hills.

I tried to remember what Arcoll had told me about his headquarters, but my memory was wiped clean. I thought they were on or near the highway, but I could not remember where the highway was. Besides, he was near the enemy, and I wanted to get back into the towns, far away from the battle-line. If I rode west I must come in time to villages, where I could hide myself. These were unworthy thoughts, but my excuse must be my tattered nerves.

Suddenly I became ashamed. That matter of the broken halter was like the finger of Divine Providence. I had been saved for a purpose, and unless I fulfilled that purpose I should again be lost. I was always a fatalist, and in that hour of strained body and soul I became something of a mystic. My panic ceased, my lethargy departed, and a more manly resolution took their place. I gripped the *schimmel* by the head and turned him due left. Now I remembered where the highroad ran, and I remembered something else.

For it was borne in on me that Laputa had fallen into my hands! Without any subtle purpose, I had played a master game. He was cut off from his people, without a horse, on the wrong side of the highroad which Arcoll's men patrolled. Without him the rising would crumble. There might be war, even desperate war, but we should fight against a leaderless foe. If he could only be shepherded to the north, his game was over, and at our leisure we could mop up the isolated concentrations.

I was now as eager to get back into danger as I had been to get into safety. Arcoll must be found and warned, and that at once, or Laputa would slip back to Inanda's Kraal under cover of dark. It was a matter of minutes, and on these minutes depended the lives of thousands. It was also a matter of ebbing strength, for with my return to common sense I saw very clearly how near my capital was spent. If I could reach the highroad, find Arcoll or Arcóll's men, and give them my news, I would do my countrymen a service such as no man in Africa could render. But I felt my head swimming, I was swaying crazily in the saddle, and my hands had scarcely the force of a child's. I could only lie limp on the horse's back, clutching at its neck with trembling fingers. I remember that my head was full of a text from the Psalms about not putting one's trust in horses. I prayed that this one horse might be an exception, for it carried more than Cæsar and his fortunes.

MY MIND is a blank about these last minutes. In less than an hour after my escape I struck the highway, but it was an hour which in the retrospect unrolls itself into unquiet years. I was dimly conscious of scrambling through

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a ditch and coming to a ghostly white road. The *schimmel* swung to the right, and, the next I knew, some one had taken my bridle and was speaking to me.

At first I thought it was Laputa, and screamed. Then I must have tottered in the saddle, for I felt an arm slip round my middle. The rider uncorked a bottle with his teeth, and forced some brandy down my throat. I choked and coughed, and then looked up to see a white policeman staring at me. I knew the police by the green shoulder-straps.

"Arcoll!" I managed to croak. "For God's sake take me to Arcoll!"

The man whistled shrilly on his fingers, and a second rider came cantering down the road. As he came up I recognized his face, but could not put a name to it.

"Losh, it's the lad Crawfurd!" I heard a voice say. "Crawfurd, man, d'ye no mind me at Lorenzo Marques? Aitken?"

The Scots tongue worked a spell with me. It cleared my wits and opened the gates of my past life. At last I knew I was among my own folk!

"I must see Arcoll! I have news for him —tremendous news! Oh, man, take me to Arcoll and ask me no questions! Where is he? Where is he?

"As it happens he's about two hundred yards off," Aitken said. "That light ye see at the top of the brae is his camp."

They helped me up the road, a man on each side of me, for I could never have kept in the saddle without their support. My message to Arcoll kept humming in my head as I tried to put it into words, for I had a horrid fear that my wits would fail me and that I should be dumb when the time came. Also I was in a fever of haste. Every minute I wasted increased Laputa's chance of getting back to the *kraal*. He had men with him every bit as skilful as Arcoll's trackers. Unless Arcoll had a big force and the best horses there was no hope.

The next thing I knew, I was being lifted off the *schimmel* by what seemed to me a thousand hands. Then came a glow of light, a great mass, in the center of which I stood blinking. I was forced to sit down on a bed, while some one gave me a cup of hot tea, far more reviving than any spirit. I became conscious that some one was holding my hands and speaking very slowly and gently.

"Davie," the voice said, "you're back among friends, my lad. Tell me, where have you been?"

"I want Arcoll!" I moaned. "Where is Retitswan?" There were tears of weakness running down my cheeks.

"Arcoll is here," said the voice; "he is holding your hands, Davie. Quiet, lad, quiet. Your troubles are all over now."

I made a great effort, found the eyes to which the voice belonged, and spoke to them.

"Listen. I stole the Collar of Prester John at Dupree's Drift. I was caught in the Berg and taken to the *kraal*—I forget its name—but I had hid the rubies."

"Yes," the voice said, "you hid the rubies. And then——"

"Inkulu wanted them back, so I made a deal with him.

"I took him to Machudi's and gave him the Collar, and then he fired at me and I climbed and climbed—I climbed on a horse," I concluded childishly.

I heard the voice say, "Yes?" again inquiringly, but my mind ran off at a tangent.

"Beyers took guns up into the Wolksberg!" I cried shrilly. "Why, the —— don't you do the same? You have the whole Kaffir army in a trap!"

I saw a smiling face before me.

"Good lad! Colles told me you weren't wanting in intelligence. What if we have done that very thing, Davie?"

BUT I was not listening. I was trying to remember the thing I most wanted to say, and that was not about Beyers and his guns. These were nightmare minutes. A speaker who has lost the thread of his discourse, a soldier who, with a bayonet at his throat, has forgotten the password—I felt like them, and worse. And to crown all I felt my faintness coming back, and my head drooping with heaviness. I was in a torment of impotence.

Arcoll, still holding my hands, brought his face close to mine, so that his clear eyes mastered and constrained me.

"Look at me, Davie!" I heard him say. "You have something to tell me, and it is very important. It is about Laputa, isn't it? Think, man! You took him to Machudi's and gave him the Collar. He has gone back with it to Inanda's Kraal. Very well, my guns will hold him there."

I shook my head. "You can't. You may split the army, but you can't hold Laputa.

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He will be over the Olifants before you fire a shot."

"We will hunt him down before he crosses. And if not, we will catch him at the railway."

"For God's sake, hurry then!" I cried. "In an hour he will be over it and back in the *kraal!*"

"But the river is a long way?" the voice said gently.

"River," I repeated hazily. "What river? The Letaba is not the place. It is the road I mean."

Arcoll's strong hands closed firmly on my wrists.

"You left Laputa at Machudi's and rode here without stopping. That would take you an hour. Had Laputa a horse?"

"Yes, but I took it," I stammered. "You can see it behind me."

Arcoll dropped my hands and stood up straight.

"By ——, we've got him!" he said, and he spoke to his companion. A man turned and ran out of the tent.

Then I remembered what I wanted to say. I struggled from the bed and put my hands on his shoulders.

"Laputa is our side of the highroad! Cut him off from his men and drive him north—north—away up to the Rooirand! Never mind the Wolksberg and the guns, for they can wait. I tell you Laputa is the Rising, and he has the Collar! Without him you can mop up the Kaffirs at your leisure. Line the highroad with every man you have, for he must cross it or perish! Oh, hurry, man, hurry! Never mind me! We're saved if we can chivvy Laputa till morning. Quick, or I'll have to go myself!"

The tent emptied and I lay back on the bed with a dim feeling that my duty was done and I could rest. Henceforth the affair was in stronger hands than mine.

I was so weak that I could not lift my legs on to the bed, but sprawled half on and half off.

A man came in—I suppose a doctor. He took off my leggings and boots, cutting them from my bleeding feet, but I felt no pain. He felt my pulse and listened to my heart. Then he washed my face and gave me a bowl of hot milk.

I think there must have been a drug in the milk, for I had scarcely drunk it before a tide of sleep seemed to flow over my brain.

CHAPTER XXVII

ARCOLL'S SHEPHERDING

WHILE I lay in a drugged slumber great things were happening. What I have to tell is no experience of my own, but the story as I pieced it together afterward from talks with Arcoll and Aitken. The history of the Rising has been compiled. As I write I see before me on the shelves two neat blue volumes in which Mr. Alexander Upton, sometime correspondent of the *Times*, has told for the edification of posterity the tale of the war between the plains and plateau.

To him the Kaffir hero is Umbooni, a half-witted ruffian, whom we afterward caught and hanged. He mentions Laputa only in a footnote as a renegade Christian who had something to do with fomenting discontent. He considers that the word "Inkulu," which he often heard, was a Zulu name for God. Mr. Upton is a picturesque historian, but he knew nothing of the most romantic incident of all. This is the tale of the midnight shepherding of the "Heir of John" by Arcoll and his irregulars.

It was of the first importance to locate Laputa's whereabouts, and for this purpose the native trackers were sent forward. There was just a chance of capturing him, but Arcoll knew too well his amazing veld-craft and great strength of body to build much hope on that.

We were none too soon. The advance men of the police rode into one of the Kaffirs from Inanda's Kraal, whom Laputa had sent forward to see if the way was clear. In two minutes more he would have been across and out of our power, for we had no chance of overtaking him in the woody ravines of the Letaba. The Kaffir, whenever he saw us, dived back into the grass on the north side of the road, which made it clear that Laputa was still there.

Had the Basutos been any good at woodcraft we should have had better intelligence. But, living in a bare mountain country, they are likely to find themselves puzzled in a forest. The best men among the trackers were some renegades of 'Mpofu, who sent back word by some device known only to Arcoll that five Kaffirs were in the woods a mile north of Main Drift. Then Laputa, as the biggest of the five, was located on the banks of the Great Letaba about two miles below Main Drift.

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Instead of going up the glen of Machudi's or the Letsitela he bore away to the north for the valley of the Klein Letaba. The pace at which he moved must have been amazing. He was a man of great physique, hard as nails for long traveling, and in his own eyes he had an empire at stake. When I look at the map and see the journey which with vast fatigue I completed from Dupree's Drift to Machudi's, and then look at the vast spaces of country over which Laputa's legs took him on that night, I am lost in admiration of the man.

About midnight he must have crossed the Letsitela. Here he made a grave blunder. If he had tried the Berg by one of the faces he might have got on to the plateau and been at Inanda's Kraal by the dawning.

A little after two o'clock a diversion occurred. Henriques succeeded in crossing the road three miles east of Main Drift. The find was reported to Arcoll, who bade a party of the scouts follow the Portuguese's trail. They shadowed him to Dupree's Drift where he crossed the Letaba. There he lay down by the roadside to sleep, while they kept him company. A hard fellow Henriques was, for he could slumber peacefully on the very scene of his murders.

Dawn found Laputa at the head of the Klein Letaba glen, not far from 'Mpofu's Kraal. He got food at a hut and set off at once up the wooded hill above it, which is a promontory of the plateau. By this time he must have been weary or he would not have blundered as he did right into a post of the farmers. He was within an ace of capture, and to save himself was forced back from the scarp.

It happened that while Laputa was being driven east from the Berg, Henriques was traveling north, and their lines intersected. I should like to have seen the meeting. It must have told Laputa what had always been in the Portuguese's mind. Henriques, I fancy, was making for the cave in the Rooirand. Laputa, so far as I can guess at his mind, had a plan for getting over the Portuguese border, fetching a wide circuit and joining his men at any of the concentrations between there and Amsterdam.

Only Laputa's incomparable veldcraft and great bodily strength prevented the two from being caught in half an hour. They doubled back, swam the Labonga again, and got into the thick bush on the north side of the Blaauwildebeestefontein road. The pursuit turned to the west in the belief that the fugitives had made for Majinje's Kraal. In reality they had recrossed the Labonga and were making for Umvelos'.

ALL this I heard afterwards, but in the meantime I lay in Arcoll's tent in deep unconsciousness. While my enemies were being chased like partridges, I was reaping the fruits of four days' toil and terror.

I slept till midday of the next day. When I awoke the hot noontide sun had made the tent like an oven. I felt better, but very stiff and sore, and I had a most ungovernable thirst. There was a pail of water with a tin pannikin beside the tent-pole, and out of this I drank repeated drafts. Then I lay down again, for I was still very weary.

But my second sleep was not like my first. It was haunted by wild nightmares. No sooner had I closed my eyes than I began to live and move in a fantastic world. The whole bush of the plains lay before me, and I watched it as if from some view-point in the clouds. It was midday and the sandy patches shimmered under a haze of heat. I saw odd little movements in the bush—a buck's head raised, a *paauw* stalking solemnly in the long grass, a big crocodile rolling off a mudbank in the river. And then I saw quite clearly Laputa's figure going east.

He was walking wearily, yet at a good pace, and his head was always turning, like a wild creature snuffing the wind. There was something with him, a shapeless shadow which I could not see clearly. His neck was bare, but I knew well that the Collar was in his pouch.

He stopped, turned west and I lost him. The bush world for a space was quite silent, and I watched it eagerly as an aeronaut would watch the ground for a descent. For a long time I could see nothing.

Then, as I looked at the river, I saw a head swimming. Nay, I saw two, one some distance behind the other. The first man landed on the far bank, and I recognized Laputa. The second was a slight, short figure, and I knew it was Henriques.

I remember feeling very glad that these two had come together. It was certain now that Henriques would not escape. Either Laputa would find out the truth and kill him, or I would come up with him and have my revenge. In any case, he was outside the Kaffir pale, adventuring on his own.

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I watched the two till they halted near a ruined building. Surely this was the store I had built at Umvelos'! The thought gave me a horrid surprise. Laputa and Henriques were on their way to the Rooirand!

I WOKE with a start to find my forehead damp with sweat. There was some fever on me, I think, for my teeth were chattering. Very clear in my mind was the disquieting thought that Laputa and Henriques would soon be in the cave.

One of two things must happen. Either Henriques would kill Laputa, get the Collar of rubies, and be in the wilds of Mozambique before I could come up with his trail, or Laputa would outwit him, and have the handling himself of the treasure of gold and diamonds which had been laid up for the Rising. If he thought there was a risk of defeat, I knew he would send my gems to the bottom of the Labonga, and all my weary work would go for nothing. I had forgotten all about patriotism. My one idea was that the treasure would be lost—the treasure for which I had risked my life.

There is a kind of courage which springs from bitter anger and disappointment. I had thought that I had bankrupted my spirit, but I found that there was a new passion in me to which my past sufferings taught no lesson. I rose to my feet, holding on by the bed, and staggered to the tent-pole. I was weak, but not so very weak that I could not make one last effort. It maddened me that I should have done so much and yet fail at the end!

From a nail on the tent-pole hung a fragment of looking-glass which Arcoll used for shaving. I caught a glimpse of my face in it, white and haggard and lined with blue bags below the eyes. The doctor the night before had sponged it, but he had not got rid of all the stains of travel. In particular there was a faint splash of blood on the left temple. I remembered that this was what I had got from the basin of goat's blood that night in the Cave.

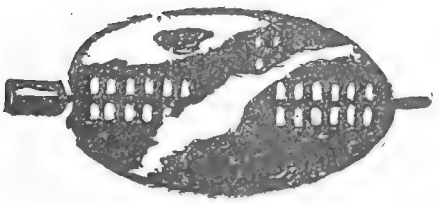
I think that the sight of that splash determined me. I must play the game to the finish, or never again know peace of mind on earth. These last four days had made me very old.

I found a pair of Arcoll's boots, roomy with much wearing, into which I thrust my bruised feet. Then I crawled to the door and shouted for a boy to bring my horse. A Basuto appeared, and, awed by my appearance, went off in a hurry to see to the *schimmel*.

It was late afternoon, about the same time of day as had yesterday seen me escaping from Machudi's. I beckoned the only white man I saw, and asked where Arcoll was. He told me that he had no news, but added that the patrols were still on the road as far as Wesselsburg. From this I gathered that Arcoll must have gone far out into the bush in his chase. I did not want to see him: above all, I did not want him to find Laputa. It was private business that I rode on, and I asked for no allies.

Somebody brought me a cup of thick coffee, which I could not drink, and helped me into the saddle. The *schimmel* was fresh and kicked freely as I cantered off the grass into the dust of the highroad. The whole world, I remember, was still and golden in the sunset.

TO BE CONCLUDED



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His Battle

by

Leo Crane

DUGAN rested his back against the white wall of a hut and pared away at a pineapple. It was a very hot day, and the perspiration stood out on Dugan's broad, ruddy face—a beety red from many such days—"irrigating the map of Ireland," as Fritz Douglas had said a moment before. The men accompanying Dugan—the men of the Twenty-third Regiment to be definite—were quite exhausted; but he evidently had not wilted under his share of the early morning fight in the rice fields, and was ready for argument of the warmest kind.

"'Tis the Irish that fight the battles of the world!" he announced without looking up from his paring. The tone of him implied that no one would dare dispute this confidently stated fact. Dugan always opened a verbal engagement with some such sweeping statement, as expansive as his face or the heart that beat under his service shirt.

It was a terribly humid day; the very palms seeming droopy in the thick yellow haze of the open spaces; several of the men had dropped off to sleep instantly on stretching out, and their snores did not invite competition; the Regiment as a whole expected every minute an order to move forward; but, notwithstanding all these things, after a brief silence following Dugan's challenge, there came the sound of a sigh and a lazy voice, both proceeding from under Harrison's hat, the hat being over Harrison's face:

"But d'yeh recall what Mr. Kipling says?"

This was answer enough. It was like a red rag to a bull. Dugan lifted himself on one elbow, flourished a plug of dripping pineapple meat held in equally dripping fingers, and rushed to the fray:

"Faith! an' well do I know what he says—all of ut. Sure, it's in that yarn of the half-breed Irishman back in the Injian hills who sang 'The Wearin' av the Grane' in gibberish, an' the quarter-breed kid of him that was afther selling the ould man out. But nevertheless an' beyant that, Mister Harrison, I maintain, if you plaze, that wherever there is a conquest or a country to be conquested, or the likes of a chance for a brave bit of a fight, whether 'tis in Honduras or Peru, or simply down at Cassidy's saloon, there you'll find some Murphy or Doolan——"

"Or Dugan," interrupted Harrison, with a laugh.

"Oh, may be it'll be nothing more than a Flynn—but they'll be first in the vanguard to get a field marshal's baton or to carry home a black eye, as the case may be. The most of them gets shot, to be sure, but 'tis

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done inadvertently when they're not expectin' ut. An' in conclusion then, the pair of yez, Harrison and Kipling to the contrary notwithstandin', I further maintain that the Irish have fought the battles of the world! Why, 'tis hist'ry! Take the Irish out of any muster since Charlemagne the Great, an' you'll have a sieve wit' which to oppose the enemy. Now there was that time when Patrick Doyle——"

But Dugan lost his chance to be the Mulvaney of the occasion, for the marching orders came crisp and sharp, the column formed, and the Twenty-third Regiment pushed on toward the town of Saint Something-or-other, to encounter once again that swarm of little brown men who would not admit that they had been defeated.

"D'yeh think there's any Irish with them devils?" asked Billy Gibbs.

"I wouldn't doubt ut, if 'twas so stated," responded Dugan, shifting his kit for better comfort. "Wherever there's fightin', there's Irish. 'Tis a game wit' 'em. They can't stand by an' see the other fellows havin' all the fun, so they rush in to see fair play, an' wind up by bossin' the job. 'Tis the way they have, the Irish—a grrate people."

"An' the most of them thieves at that," commented Harrison, as he always did, to infuriate Dugan if he could. "They don't dare face the music at home, so what have they to lose?"

This time, however, Dugan did not retort savagely. His face took on a whimsical smile, as he replied:

"True for yeh! In some cases, perhaps 'tis so. But thot only proves that there's good work still for thieves to do, an' thot the rale Irish have some idea of redemption. They rise to the occasion, like larks afore the morn, an' to the devil wit' the past of them, for he'll get that much annyway! 'Tis a poor sort of thief that hasn't somethin' of good left in him."

"Quit it!" suggested the lieutenant, impatiently, and there was silence in the ranks.

II

THE town of Saint Something-or-other was situated in a crook of the river, and the railroad, which the Twenty-third had come to call "the lifeline," crossed a swift current at this point. Whatever the prospect elsewhere, this town had to be taken in order to keep the railroad open. A desperate defense could be expected, because, once the town had fallen, there would be a crossing of the troops into a new province and a straight drive until the next natural barrier checked them, for at this game the troops had yet to fail. In towns, however, the enemy more than once had demonstrated a stubborn fighting ability, and for the last the Twenty-third had paid a price. A second column was approaching it from the east, though, and between them they hoped at one bite to secure the river crossing and the freedom of the line.

This was the situation faced at the time of the break in Dugan's argument, and perhaps he wondered if it ever would be continued, for according to the prospect and the ever ruthless tally of war, a number of them were due to repose for long in the rice-fields, undisturbed by any debate, and neither Dugan nor Harrison could escape this opportunity to join the muster of the dead.

In skirmish order they pressed back the first lines of the enemy, driving them from field to jungle and out again, until the afternoon—a sullen afternoon with the sun of it like a glowing ball of brass above them—saw the Twenty-third Regiment very little closer to the real town than had the morning. A series of wicked entrenchments was before them, half hidden by undergrowth, and it became obvious that those in command did not intend to storm these until something was heard from the second column.

The inactivity of the present, however, with the men in the hot sun, suffering that nervousness which comes with a dropping fire, was wearing. Several men had been hit, and two of them, poor devils, badly. Worse than that, they had no water. The river in the distance, a silvery glimmer amid the dark vegetation of the shores, offered nothing but a tormenting promise.

A tank-car, brought up from the rear, had slipped its coupling while on a grade and had drifted down to the level, into the zone of fire. It was beyond the lines and not yet the prize of the enemy, but its recapture would prove a piece of business that must be paid for. With the coming of night, if they were not in the town before that, this car would be lost, drawn down to the river, ditched possibly, at least rendered useless. Already the men were having a thirsty time of it, their canteens having been drained early or the remaining contents contributed to those wounded. At best, the canteens

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had held warm, sickening stuff that induced rather than slaked thirst. Dugan said it was sheer suicide to drink it, and for once Harrison agreed with him.

For a time the firing kept up briskly. Now there came a lull—a shot or two at intervals. The second column had not been heard from and the Twenty-third seemed likely to stagnate before the place.

Growing tired of the waiting, Harrison turned on his back to rest. He lay sprawled out, with his hat tipped over his face, his rifle close beside him, and the whole outfit slightly protected by a ridge of earth—which with bayonet and fryingpan he had somewhat reenforced—lifting between him and the spiteful little brown men beyond. As he lay thus, his eyes shielded from the glare, it is singular that Harrison thought very little of the fighting to be done, of the reasons for or the results of it—not even of his own chance to wade through it successfully. He thought of different things, past happenings, some of which had occurred overseas in what was called "God's country," for which, however, Harrison had a different name and an entirely different sort of regard.

And intermingled with these peculiar thoughts ran a tiny thread of suggestion that made strange patterns for the brain of a man to be weaving on a battle-field. Dugan's answer of the morning had been disturbing, and though he had laughed at the time, Harrison now, when alone, wondered what had prompted Dugan to say what he had, and if he had meant anything more than jest. Certainly this speculation caused Harrison more anxiety than did the drought of his canteen or the danger of his position.

Whatever decision he might have arrived at in the course of this mental review, a new sound caused a sudden break. Such a sound he had not expected; such a sound is usually fraught with surprise even though fighting men hear the like frequently. Harrison carefully turned over, tilting his hat to see—and he saw. Fritz Douglas, his comrade on the right, had assumed a strange position for one experienced in skirmish work.

"What the ——!" began Harrison, very much alarmed. Fritz Douglas hit! He could scarcely believe it.

"What's the matter, Douglas?" he called out.

Then he heard a groan, and saw the man's hand reach out and the fingers of it clutch spasmodically at the dusty brown earth.

"Now I'll be——" Harrison did not finish the sentence. He began crawling toward the other man, slowly, cautiously, keeping his body hidden beneath the shelter of the little ridge. Soon he was close enough to hear the gasping breath, and when he saw the face of Douglas distorted by pain, Harrison broke forth and cursed volubly.

This volley of profanity rather accelerated his movement, and a few minutes later he had Douglas slung across him and was crawling away from the place toward the rear. The wounded man lay a dead weight across his shoulders and along his back, like a dead man, indeed, and more than once—for the crawling in this fashion was tough work—Harrison wondered whether his task were not a useless one. He would stop to gain breath and to listen—then a gasp would reassure him of the life to be saved, and on he would go again. Not until he had gained a protected place did he dare attempt to carry the man in his arms. Quickly he sought the field hospital.

"Another one for yeh, sir," he said to the surgeon.

He waited for a moment, during the examination, anxiously hoping for a better word than he received.

"Is he bad, sir?" he asked.

"Right bad off," came the reply, abruptly, and then, "No water for them makes it tough. Poor fellows! But back to your place, my man!"

HARRISON returned to the position he had left. A great many worrisome things he carried with him—a mental weight, for he could not put aside the groaning of the several "bad ones," nor the thought of Fritzie Douglas, a good mate and a merry fellow, stretched out back there, helpless, downright bad off, and with no drop of moisture for comfort. Harrison muttered to himself, as if protesting against the vast scheme of things. He sprawled out again, with his hat balanced on the bridge of his nose, and lay thinking of this.

It was red afternoon, a seemingly endless afternoon, and Harrison's mouth had become as dry as if filled with brick-dust. He spat several times, and wondered how a man felt with a hole drilled in his midriff. He laughed, too, a mirthless sort of laughter. When, occasionally, he surveyed the strip of landscape before him, he cursed its ap-

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parently lifeless stretches and the cowardice of the brown men who would not come forth to be killed. When he fancied a movement of the foliage, he viciously pumped shot after shot at the place, and grinned and said he hoped he had damaged somebody. But the idea of Fritzie Douglas, and Barnsdall, and Spike Shaw, wounded and groaning for water, he could not endure. He began crawling again.

When he had reached the next man, he was asked in vivid language what he meant by leaving his place.

"Give me your canteen, you whelp, and then go back to sleep," he said.

"There's nothin' in it, an' if there was, would I split with yeh? I'm not dotty yet, though the sun has me going."

"Hand acrost the can, afore I ruin yeh!" demanded Harrison.

Down the line he crawled, expecting to be halted by an officer at any moment. When the summons to explain his queer actions did come, Harrison had collected, amid threats and jokes and advices, a dozen of the canvas-covered water-bottles, and these were strung around him, rattling like empty gourds, so that he resembled some curious clutter-bug wallowing in the dust.

"What do you mean by this, Harrison?" called the officer.

"By your leave, sir, I mean to negotiate several drinks from that tank-car. I just carried Douglas back to the hospital tent, an' he's bad off, sir, with a hole through him, an' the doctor was saying that the water had give out, an' I believe I can make it, sir."

"It's a fool business. Go back to your place in the line."

"There's a chance, sir. I've studied it all out, these two hours. Lemme go. I don't want the swig for myself—it's for the boys back there, an' Fritzie Douglas is shot through the lung." He begged for opportunity. "We'll not get in the town by night, sir, an' they're weepin' for the water," he went on hurriedly, finishing with a burst of boldness, "an' you may be needin' it, too, then, sir."

The officer glanced at him quickly, frowned and smiled.

"If you come back, Harrison," he said, looking away, "I'll forget that."

For a moment Harrison hesitated; then the canteens clinked hollowly as he began his slow progress down the line. He paused when close to Dugan and said:

"Have yeh got the makin's, Irish?"

"I maintain that——" began Dugan, without turning his head.

"Cut it out," said the other, huskily, nervously. "Toss me the 'baccy. I want a bracer. I'm goin' down to Cassidy's, to rush the duck."

He caught the yellow bag, rolled a cigarette, and crawled on, a thin trail of smoke behind him. It was his purpose to circle the left, to approach the tank-car under as much cover as possible, having the town and its defenses on the right. In this way he would be covered by the fire of the regiment, and in his last dash, from the trees to the goal itself, he would also have the car as a tiny shield to protect him on the run through the open.

An hour passed without the men catching sight of him. They remained in the position of the day, awaiting the attack of the second column which had not materialized. Dugan kept an eager watch for him, and when he saw a black object spurt out from the jungle's edge and move into the sunlit plaza surrounding the car, he muttered reproachfully:

"There he is, the ijiot! An' for why did he go that way—why not take the engine an' bring back the whole package, b'dad? There's no sense in bein' modest about a job like that. Hurroo! Faith, an' he's got to it, aw'right, the gran' lad that he is!"

And sure enough, Harrison had reached the car.

III

HARRISON had wormed his way through a thick piece of jungle, and, after much swearing and sweating and many scratches, found himself facing a bare stretch of yellow ground, devoid of the smallest shelter, across which he would have to go to gain the car's side. It seemed a much larger space of barren ground than it had when viewed from the ridge-top. He now saw that the angle and distance had shortened it to the eye, and his heart sank when he realized how far he would have to travel as a target for those of his enemies who would see. The car, too, now that he was in position to estimate its true worth as a shield, appeared all too small.

Harrison spat, as was his custom when harassed by thought, but he did not waver. Here he was, facing the job, and it had to

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be carried through. He could not crawl back to earn the scorn of those who had already voted him a hero, for he was wise enough in his generation to know that flatterers become virulent when deceived. And also he thought of Dugan, the bantering Irishman, who would have something to say. Dugan's comment, and the possibility of Dugan's knowledge, had been and was his spur.

Harrison examined the straps by which the canteens were slung about him, gritted his teeth, wedged on his hat, and started. His plunge out into the sunlight was, after these preparations, like that made by a swimmer who takes a desperate chance.

He had been a good runner, and he figured that after covering two-thirds of the distance, the car would serve to blanket him somewhat. The two-thirds in the open, exposed as a mark, lighted by a golden sun that seemed to shriek out "Here he is!" he viewed as a terrible space, each step of which might mean the brink of eternity. Many seconds, minutes—hours he thought while running—must pass ere he reached the journey's end. And the terrific waiting for discovery! And then the awful possibility of a leaden paralysis that would cut his effort short! How like a snail he moved!

He muttered to himself, "Faster! Faster!" but his feet and legs seemed weighted. He ran desperately, the odd dozen canteens clumping and clanking together, until he feared the very noise of them would betray him. Now his breath came hard, and he tried to coach himself forward, as he might have in a race against men instead of against detection and death.

"Go on now! Buck up! They haven't seen yeh yet! They're blind! To —— wit' 'em! They couldn't hit a barn, nohow! On wit' yeh! 'Tis the last lap, an' yeh have 'em beat to a whisper—ahhhhhh!" He drew in his breath with a hissing sound, for the metallic whanging hum of the first bullet had reached him. Now came a second and a third.

"On, on, yeh drayhorse!"

Gasping, staggering, fighting for his breath as a lurching runner who, all in, flings up his arms to breast the tape and fall, he put the black shadow of the car between him and that yellow stretch of sand. He was very weak now, and when he reached the car he could not draw himself up at once. He grasped the hot iron handguard of it, and swung there in the sun, half fainting, his brain reeling, and his eyes seeing only great yellow and greenish black aureoles, an atmosphere of dread and exhaustion.

Now he had recovered a little. He dragged himself up on the foot-board of the car and ran down it, the tank a splendid barricade. He saw that he would have to swing the top of the manhole back and that he must expose himself somewhat in lowering the canteens into the water; but so far he had gone and the rest must be done.

Harrison uttered an exclamation of surprise when he had forced the cover back and peered into the depths. The car showed not half full! He unscrewed the covers of the canteens and prepared to lower them down. Just then a bullet whanged the iron side of the car so close that he could feel the drumming of the metal, and the vibrations of it crept up his chilling spine.

Now, hastily, he dropped the canteens down by the straps, and he hoped he would have three minutes more. He could hear the water chugging and gurgling into the little bottles—but suddenly came a shrieking thing, and a handful of sand lashed into his face. He paled and started as if he had felt a cold hand on his shoulder. They had a field-piece, and they had turned it on the car! They were shelling him out!

IN THAT instant he wavered and lost nerve; he slipped on the hot side of the tank; the straps left his hand, and the canteens were gone!

A moment, and he was cold again. Shell or no shell, he must get back those canteens. He tried to figure how deep the water would prove in the tank and came to a quick conclusion that it was not more than waist-high. He drew himself up and dropped down, feet first, into the dark. With a splash he wallowed in a warm, pleasant bath. His feet slipped, but with one hand he gripped hard a metal rib of the car and steadied himself. In drawing up, he swayed against the slimy side and rested there to get his bearings before beginning the groping search. Another of the shells whistled overhead.

"Close, that!" he muttered, glancing up; and then he wondered whether he could, by a spring, grasp the edge of the manhole when he was ready to leave. As he stood braced against the metal side, there sounded

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a whanging roar—the car rocked, the water hissed and churned around him. He turned sick, swayed, and caught at the metal rib with his other hand.

He could not tell how long he had trembled in that position. Something had happened, something—that horrible rending sound meant that they had hit the car. But what was wrong with him? An awesome silence had enwrapped him. He could not raise his right arm; it had gone down useless. His right side had no feeling; he was not aware that he had more than one arm —the left, and a leg. His head was all right, he thought, but he could not move his neck. He was held upright by that one good hand and the left foot braced against the rivets in the car's bottom. What if they hit the car again? he thought. Then he realized that it would make little difference as to his chances. Better hit it again, and that quickly, to end everything; for he was helpless, paralyzed by the shock of the impact. What mattered that the wrecked bulkhead was fast draining the car? He was helpless.

A few minutes later his arm and foot gave way. He slipped down—down to the floor of the car, with just his head out of the flood. He felt no pain. He could not move, and he wondered whether any one would come for him. He lay staring up at the manhole, a bright patch of sky above it, and calmly wondered what sort of face would be the first to look down upon him.

IV

"THAT hit the car, sir!" said Dugan to his officer.

"Poor fellow!"

Dugan's red face showed an explosive excitement; his blood was bubbling, and when he spoke the words came out thick with brogue:

"For God's sake, sor, give me l'ave to run thot enjine down there! I can do ut, an' I can't see the man die like thot. I've run enjines afore, sor, an' I'll couple up an' be back——"

But Dugan had not waited for permission in words. He saw the flash of the officer's eye, the glance of him, as if to say: "Can you do it, man?" Dugan was off. The engine stood a quarter of a mile in the rear, and he knew that there would be enough steam to move it. The trouble was in moving himself with a satisfying speed. Blowing, and with eyes wide and staring, he reached the place.

"Give me steam here, boys!"

The two men on duty did not respond with the alacrity Dugan thought necessary, so he spun one of them away by a glancing blow of his fist, and seized a shovel to do his own stoking.

"Give me steam, an' thot quick!" he gasped to the other man, "for I've got orders to go through hell an' back again wit' this bit of junk!"

A few minutes and he had the drivers moving.

"Outside!" he said to his helper. "'Tis no trip for babes!"

He paid no attention to the calls of those who had toiled after him. He waved them his hand, and swore to himself that he could not hear. The pistons were dragging now, and the wheels biting the rails, and the wind whipped into his face. A scattering of dull reports in the far distance told him that the second column had arrived, and that this diversion would help his attempt.

Down the grade swung the snorting locomotive, bearing Dugan, the fighting Irishman, to the assault as some charioteer of old. Once past the cover of the trees, the lead greeted him; but he could laugh, and he did, mockingly, rejoicing in the speed of his ironclad and the vibrations of the piston-strokes.

Now he was bearing down on the tank-car. What if that shot had damaged its running gear? He had not thought of that before! But no matter, no matter at all, for here came Dugan, one of the Irish, glad to play his part in the game that all Irishmen had played, off and on, since the beginning, and he would jack Harrison out of it, b'dad, dead or alive, b'dad, an' fool 'em yet, the dirthy beggars that begrudged a man a drink, so he would!

"Are yeh there, me bhoy?" he yelled, as the bumpers crashed together. He slipped to the ground and thrust the coupling fast. A bullet shattered the glass of the headlight and sent the slivers all over him. But he coolly took time to clamber around the side of the tank and to look down through the round port of it. He saw a white face and a pair of staring eyes.

"Hurt?" he asked.

There was no answer.

"Be heavens!" he exclaimed, dropping to

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the ground, "if you're dead, I'll have to save me own life to lend yeh a public funeral, wit' a special train, b'dad, an' all thot!"

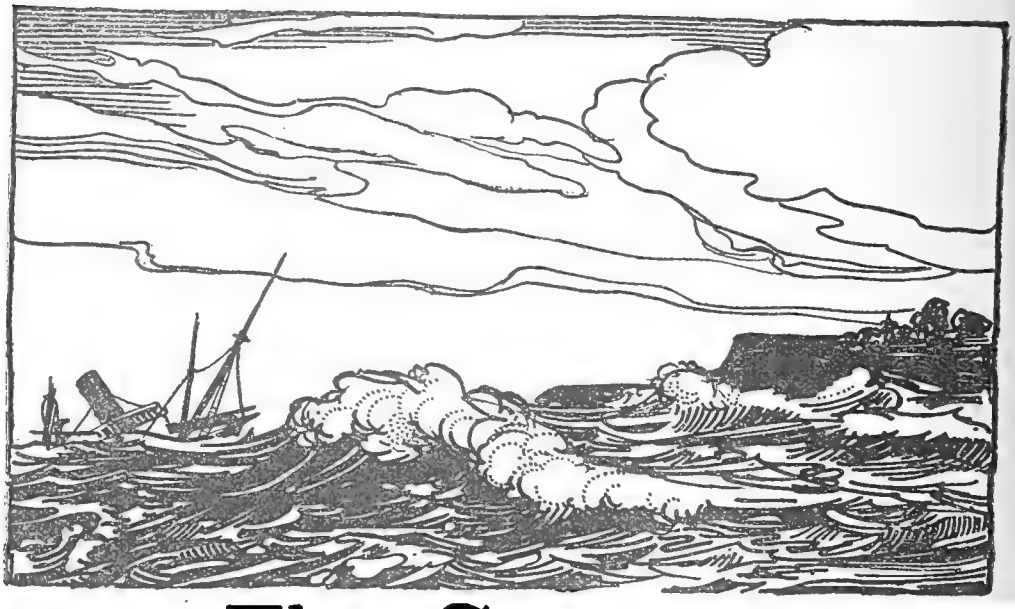
Then he reversed the drivers and gave the engine full steam, and swore with delight when she moved and the tank-car with her. Close to the floor of the cab he crouched as they moved backward up the grade. He set the whistle shrieking out the defiance that he had no voice for.

"'Tis a dry car an' a dead man!" he called hoarsely when the lines were reached. He was partly wrong. Harrison smiled as they lifted him out into the light. His left hand gripped some dripping straps, and the canteens followed. He seemed to understand their praises, and muttered:

"No, no—fight the battle, Dugan said—my real name—Flynn—wanted—forgery—back in Brooklyn——"

That night the canteen man died.

"As I observed," quoth Dugan, sucking hard on his pipe, "for good or bad, there's work to do, an' the redemption's in 'em."



The Coward

By Ernest T. Edgerton.

A GREAT race against time had been going on for a matter of twenty-four hours at one of the mammoth grain elevators of Fort William, while a mighty river of wheat flowed intermittently into the hold of the vessel moored at the dock. But the deluge ceased at times; excessive anxiety and too much haste caused many accidents and delays, and in the meantime the minutes and hours swept on with relentless regularity. At the close of the tenth day of December, when the race was over, the marine underwriters had shut the door of protection, and the magnificent new steel freighter was outside, too late for insurance by twenty-four hours.

From the date of the laying of the keel of the *Hercules* it had been rush, rush. Work on her was pushed day and night at the Lorain shipyards, the owners having set their hearts on the distinction of closing the season of navigation with the pride of their fleet. The first of December she cleared

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from Lorain, going up light to Fort William for her first cargo. Barring accidents, she could have made it with a day or two to spare in which to get out of Superior and through the St. Mary's River, with its tortuous channels and shallow connecting lakes, before the official close of navigation and the expiration of insurance.

In the evolution of freight-carriers on the great lakes the *Hercules* was the very last and supreme effort of perfection, both in size and general efficiency. From the single-masted schooner, measuring forty to sixty feet, and of a few tons' burden, grew the big yellow *Wolvin*, the wonder of 1905. This marvel in ship-building, six hundred feet in length, with a capacity of ten thousand tons, remained the monarch of the lakes until the launching of the *Hercules*, six hundred and ninety feet, fifteen thousand tons.

The *Hercules* cleared from Fort William at about six in the evening, passing slowly out of the harbor and creeping cautiously by the jagged spits which mark the entrance, and on between the darkened lighthouses at the breakwater, out into the lake.

The sky was clear and starlit, the air warm and balmy, with a soft wind blowing from the south. It was quite too nice for the master, Captain McLachlan, who sniffed the air suspiciously.

"I'm thinking you will have the best of it to-night, Mr. Clark," he observed finally to the first officer, who was about to begin an eight-hour watch. The electric lights of Fort William were then strung low along the dark horizon, like a strand of pearls, and, having seen his vessel well on her way, the Captain was about to go below.

"I'll leave my troubles to Finzel, sir, in the second watch. There will be something astir by then."

"And, come my watch, we'll be in the thick of it," added McLachlan. "I'll have a gale at my back to help me along."

"Isle Royal light off the port bow, sir," came up from the darkness of the bow, where the lookout paced back and forth in his narrow quarters.

"All right," responded Clark. "There's a man who is late every year," he added, indicating the distant light with a sweep of his hand.

"Well, I wouldn't mind if the fellow at White Fish Point would be a bit late, too," observed McLachlan. "Let me make the Soo, and I'll ask no odds. But then, Mr. Clark, every man must have his play-spell. We'll make out. I'll be going below."

"Good-night, sir. We have the water to ourselves, anyway."

Captain McLachlan's prophecy was fulfilled when, shortly after midnight, the soft, mild south wind developed into a gale, driving before it a fine, pelting rain. Then the wind veered into the northwest, the rain changed to sleet, and then to snow.

When the Captain came on the bridge at ten in the morning to take his watch, the vessel and the crested, tumbling sea were shrouded in the semi-darkness of early dawn. The *Hercules* was rushing on through a blinding snow-storm with a fifty-mile gale at her stern.

Some time during the day she passed the treacherous White Fish Point, but how close no one would ever know, for the *Hercules* was shut in by a veil of snow so dense and impenetrable that even her after-spar was invisible from the bridge. In the early light of morning—a clear, freezing morning after the violence of the storm—she entered the locks at the Soo, floating up with the water, white and ghostly in the gray light. She was drawing twenty feet, every inch the locks would stand at the sill, and she moved in with extreme caution.

When the belated sun got up from behind the buildings fringing the park and put the life of its rays into the ice-covered spars and rigging of the *Hercules* and touched up her armor of ice, the vessel was a sight to behold. A gleaming, scintillating fairy ship she seemed, driven in by the night's storm.

After a delay of an hour or more, she passed out, with seven hours of daylight in which to thread the windings of St. Mary's River, and the dangerous shoals of the small lakes leading to Lake Huron.

The reaction of spirits in both officers and crew was no less pronounced than in the elements. Faces of all sorts were cleared of clouds, and some notoriously rough tempers were now as placid as the water about them. Even Finzel, surly, and sometimes brutal, actually passed a joke down to the man at the wheel.

AS THE *Hercules* entered Hay Lake the cabin-woman appeared at the door of the crew's mess-room and rang the breakfast-bell lustily. At about the same time the big, hulking figure

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of a man emerged from the officers' cabin forward, and slouched aft in her direction, swinging a dilapidated suit-case.

"Why, Red Chambers! Where'd you come from?" she demanded with manifest pleasure and great surprise, as he approached.

He was a big, awkward, angular French Canadian, whose name, Chambord, had been altered to suit the limited abilities of his associates. Something over six feet he stood, without a pound of superfluous flesh upon his powerful frame, trained to the hour by hard outdoor work. The expression of his tanned face was both amiable and stupid, his small eyes dull with the neutral light of an undeveloped brain, and the whole set off by a shock of coarse red hair, immense as to size and exceedingly fiery as to hue.

He halted at the sound of her voice, no less surprised than she; then he drew nearer with diffidence, and set down his suit-case with solicitous care. His great calloused hands went out as if he meant to embrace her, then he thrust them stolidly into his pockets.

"Shipped at the Soo."

The woman was many years from the days of her girlhood, of that uncertain age between thirty and forty, thin to the point of scragginess, with the pinched face of one who had labored hard and endured much. She came scarcely to his shoulder.

"What fur?" she asked, looking up with a slight flush of pleasure under his eager eyes.

"Lookout."

She allowed him a moment of grace, as a woman by instinct will, in which to reveal himself, or at least to flatter, and then stepped back to the cabin door with a patient sigh of disappointment. "Well, I must go wait on table. See you ag'in, Red."

"This here's my last trip," he began, tapping the toe of his heavy boot against the suit-case. "I got a sister lives down at the Falls. Thought I might as well ship down."

"You can't quit, Red. I never see a man or woman what could. Well, where you been, anyway."

"Me? Oh, up in Canady. I took up a claim in the Nor'west; had to live six month on the piece. Now it's mine. Broke up some this Summer. I'm done with sailorin'."

She eyed him wistfully and, in the interval of silence, studied his ox-like face; then she stepped inside. "Well, I gotta go. See you ag'in, Red."

"Sure. I'll be in to breakfast soon's I stow this here grip." He saw her turn, and with two or three long strides he was inside. "What's the hurry? Say, when I come out the Captain's door, an' see you—Well, me an' you's been fren's a good while, Katie. Must been a leetle rough last night."

"Say, Red, what you want?" she demanded anxiously, even desperately, for the minutes were passing.

He scratched his long, heavy jaw, and repeated judicially, "It must been a leetle mite rough."

"I gotta go." She looked up into his face with one last appeal. "Red, was there somethin'?"

He reached out his long arm and grasped her wrist. "Katie, you gotta go up there with me. I got six hundred acres, an' you won't need to worry ag'in about the next meal. Let's me an' you git married when we git to port. What say?"

She gave a little sigh of relief. What she was about to say was very evident, but it remained unsaid because of the slamming of a door behind her, which caused her face to turn white even before she felt the heavy tread upon the cabin floor. She knew by intuition who it was. The short stocky man closed the door violently and leaned against it briefly, then he walked slowly up to them, his hard, vicious face distorted with rage. When within a few feet he stopped, rested his hands easily on his hips, and grunted savagely.

The woman ventured a faint smile after she had controlled her panic, then she said timidly, turning to Chambers, "O' course you heard before now of Chicago Frazer, champeen of the lakes?"

Chambers looked down at the little man with a dull expression of surprise. His idea was that a champion should be a giant, while Frazer probably weighed no more than a hundred and fifty. The latter was in no way placated by the woman's desire to flatter. He changed his position, folding his arms, and stood at rest in an artistic yet unstudied attitude of conscious prowess —and of challenge.

"Shake han's with Red Chambers," she went on, continuing the formalities of an introduction by turning to Frazer.

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Red stretched out his powerful hand with the diffidence of a boy, but when he looked into Frazer's little rat-like eyes, gleaming with belligerency, the hand dropped.

Chicago Frazer stepped forward, ducked his bullet head aggressively and demanded, "You huntin' a scrap?"

Chambers's face flushed and then went pale. "No," he replied with an eagerness which betrayed fear.

"You know what you'll git if you fool with this woman?"

The woman took a step toward them, and seemed about to protest, but the bully had only to turn his eyes upon her and she was silenced.

"Make a sneak!" Then—"Wait!" he commanded as she turned to obey him. Then for the first time he smiled with pleasure. He could torture both at the same time. He turned to Chambers.

"You got any claim to this woman?"

Chambers shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other, coughed perfunctorily behind the back of his hand, but avoided the eyes of Frazer. "Well, I can't jest say——"

"Stuck on her?" In his rage he lifted his clenched fist as if to strike, and the woman gave a little gasp of fear. He turned upon her with a curse. "Shut that yap o' yours! You listen to this big stiff. Now what d'ye say—stuck on this woman?" Chambers dropped his eyes, and made no reply, while the woman saw with anguish the fading of her hopes. "Come down to the coal-bunkers. I'll fight you fer her!"

The woman leaned forward eagerly, and smiled triumphantly, for surely no man would decline such a challenge. And she saw the outcome; she had at last a powerful protector. The next instant she uttered a sob of dismay.

"I ain't no fighter," he said meekly.

"Don't want to make no claim?" asked Frazer with wonderful solicitude.

Chambers swallowed hard, unlocked his thick fingers, and finally shook his head. Frazer surveyed his giant proportions, from his broad feet to his fiery shock of hair, then he turned with pleasant deliberation to the stricken woman: "I guess that's about all."

The woman fled by the rear door, while Chambers went by the front, his head bowed, conscious of his cowardice, his cheeks burning with shame.

So far as Frazer was concerned, it was a closed incident. Being an oiler, he did not encounter Chambers very often, but when he did he seemed to entertain no animosity toward his fallen rival. He was a 'longshoreman by occupation, and a tough and bully by instinct, and was making one of his infrequent voyages, probably to hunt up some new fighter at Buffalo worthy of his prowess.

THE *Hercules* emerged from Detour Passage along in the night. She should have made it in at least six hours, but she had been compelled to buck the ice many times during the day. She made better time through the choppy straits of Mackinac, and before morning was out in Lake Huron, with plenty of water about her, and a free voyage.

A sharp, cold wind arose during the day, blowing from the northeast, but rather too dry and keen to foretoken snow. The sky was squally and typical of a blustery day of early Winter, with great banks of fleecy clouds and occasional patches of blue sky serving as a background for the black, choppy storm-clouds which rode the wind, hurrying on to the southwest. It was the sort of day the mariner likes, with the wind in the right quarter for a southern course, and enough sea to keep a craft awake and at her work.

When night settled down the *Hercules* was making splendid headway, her long, low-lying hull shrouded in ice, to which the flying spray, freezing as it fell, added continually.

Captain McLachlan surrendered the watch to the first officer shortly after midnight and went to bed. He lay awake a short time making plans and congratulating himself on the success of the trip. He was the first master to take down a cargo of such magnitude, and he was doing it unaided save by his own binnacle and his intimate knowledge of reefs and channels.

He had been in slumber perhaps two hours when he awoke with a start and sat up in his berth, alert and alarmed. There was no sound save the splash of the waves against the prow, like the rustle of a woman's skirts, and the wind whistling around the wheelhouse above him. Yet he sensed danger. The vessel did not feel right to him. There was something in her movement which was unusual—which he did not understand. After a few moments he lay

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down on his back, allowing every muscle to relax, and at the same time tightening every nerve, while he felt his ship as a physician might note the throbbings of a pulse. There was the constant tremor, as the revolving screw drove the big hull through the resisting water, but there was also something else. He sprang up with a gasp of alarm, hustled on his clothes, and rushed out of his cabin and up on the bridge.

"Mr. Clark, where are you?" he demanded, as he swept into the wheelhouse with the wind.

"We ought to be about off Au Sable, sir."

"But feel her, man, feel her!" He ran out on the bridge, followed by Clark, who now felt for the first time that the sea was catching her broadside more than it should. "You are off your course! You are heading for the Barques! Put her over to port, and hold her!" he shouted to the wheel man.

Mr. Clark grasped the brass rail and peered out into the impenetrable darkness with dismay. He felt it now—that peculiar side movement, quite aside from the roll of her, which nothing but the mysterious sixth sense of a sailor would detect.

Somehow, as the first officer rested in security, the *Hercules* had drifted in five or six miles and they were now crossing the mouth of Saginaw Bay, that storm-center of the lakes, where the winds hold high revel and the sea is seldom calm. They were undoubtedly making straight for the jagged reef of Pointe aux Barques, stretching out obliquely into Lake Huron and known as the "graveyard of the lakes."

The *Hercules*, heavily laden, responded sluggishly to the helm and stood broadside to the sea, wallowing in the waves like an overfed hog. The master and his first officer stood silently on the conning-deck, on the roof of the wheelhouse, endeavoring to gain, by sensing, that knowledge of the situation which neither eye nor ear could afford them. Behind the canvas shelter which reached to their chins they stood side by side, noting alertly every motion in silent suspense.

"We're making way now, sir," said Clark.

"Not as I feel her. She don't answer. There's no life in her."

Under the force of her mighty compound engines the *Hercules* was driving hard at the sea, her bow pointing due east. The gale caught her full and contested the power of her churning screw, and so, as she moved forward, she also drifted to starboard, until finally, about four o'clock, she ran full tilt on the reef.

The shock, coming unexpectedly, threw both men off their feet; then a reverse lurch sent them over the glaring floor as on a toboggan. Captain McLachlan caught hold of the signal-box as he passed, lifted himself up, and pulled the lever connecting with the engine-room. The throb of the engines ceased and the screw slackened, leaving the *Hercules* swinging in the gale as on a pivot. She had gone on broadside, striking the reef amidships.

FOR quite an hour McLachlan tried every expedient known to himself or his officers to free his ship. He tried coaxing her off with the assistance of the swells; he summoned every pound of steam and endeavored to drive her over by sheer force; and he tried just as desperately to back her off. All this he did faithfully and well, because he knew it to be his duty, but secretly he had little hope. He saw with the clear eye of knowledge her desperate position—resting on a narrow base, with both ends free and unsupported and all the immense weight of her cargo straining at her middle.

But there was more. He had none too much faith in the way ships are built nowadays, and a question ran through his mind:

Were thirty-odd lives, a fortune in grain, and another in the ship, to be sacrificed as the price of hustle? He shut his lips over something like a sob, and clutched the top of the canvas shield.

Captain McLachlan was a pious, God-fearing man, as many a mariner is, both on lake and ocean. Perhaps in the long watches of the night, under the limitless sky spangled with planets, they catch a faint idea of His infinite greatness, or it may be they discern His majesty in the storm. At all events, they learn the lesson of resignation and the courage of faith.

"Come, Mr. Clark," he said quietly, and made his way to the stairs. Again on the bridge, he threw open the door of the wheelhouse, and beckoned to the man still clinging to the wheel. "Come, Leonard, let us be getting below."

As the natural protector and leader, he descended the icy steps to the deck, and

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then to the after cabin, struggling over the glaring surface, clinging to the rail, under the freezing shower of the driving spray. Cool and steady, he stood there in the lee of the cabin, waiting for the inevitable.

"All hands up, Mr. Clark!" he exclaimed finally. "She is bulging amidships. The crew is all up and ready, of course, but see that no one is left in the engine-rooms or bunkers. Mr. Finzel, get your boats off! Lively, but no panic. Any minute our wires may part and the lights go out."

The crew of thirty assembled in a motley group in the shelter of the cabin. Some carried hand-baggage, and others small paper parcels containing their dearest possessions. The more provident had put on oilskins, while the chronically unprepared shivered in their scant clothing. The woman sobbed unreproved.

"I want order, now," said the Captain, facing them. "Pass me in single file, Mr. Clark first, Mr. Finzel next, then the woman." Just then there was a sag in the after part, which seemed to be giving way beneath them. Somewhere down in the hold the electric wires were parted by the wrench, and the ship was in darkness.

"Steady there!" he cried, detecting the start of a panic. "A little dark won't hurt any one."

A figure slipped around the rear of the group and made a dash for the boats. It had nearly reached the side when another, taking a flying start, skimmed across the deck. The second seized the first by the throat and flung it back. The flying figure landed in the center of the deck and hurtled over against the opposite rail, where it lay in a heap.

"Well, who might you be?" demanded McLachlan, after making a vain attempt to distinguish the identity of the towering figure looming up before him.

"Red Chambers, sir."

"Oh, yes, I remember you. Lookout. Well, Reddy, you are a handy man to have about. Stand right where you are. File between us, and move."

In the darkness they passed silently along in order and clambered down the ladder. Captain McLachlan brought up the rear.

"Everybody off?" he asked, "No one left behind?"

"All off, sir," responded Clark from the first boat, which was echoed by Finzel from the stern of the second.

"Put off, then! Hold steady when you get out of the lee and get a good headway!"

His last words of command were almost lost by the groaning and the grinding of parting timbers, by the rending of rivets, and the rush of the released deluge of wheat, as the *Hercules* broke in the middle. The boats got away just in time to escape the suction, when both ends of the big freighter dived into the water with a mighty splash. After a hard battle they brought up safely in the moving ice and slush a hundred feet from land. The huddled and shivering figures struggled over the sides of the half-filled boats, in their stiff, frozen clothing, and waded to solid ground, two of the men carrying the woman on their locked hands, by order of Clark.

"LINE up your people, Mr. Clark. Then we must hunt cover, or some of us will freeze," said McLachlan, when all had gathered in a silent, shaking group. Port Austin was but two or three miles away, and the dark outlines of the sleeping village could be discerned by close scrutiny, like a heap of rubbish at the end of the vista of snow.

Mr. Clark passed before the line and counted them; then he retraced his steps, and counted them again. "Only twenty-eight here, sir," he announced.

Captain McLachlan wheeled about suddenly and strode up to his officers. "How is this, Mr. Clark? Mr. Finzel, how is this? I had your word that all were off. Who are missing?"

Day was by now breaking, very faintly, like a silvery veil of gossamer gently lowered down upon the white earth and the turbulent sea. The officers passed along and, by the aid of the dim light, scanned every face.

"I find sir, that lookout Chambers and oiler Frazer are missing," said the first officer.

Captain McLachlan immediately called for volunteers to go back with him in search of the bodies. The rest of the crew were to start at once for Port Austin. He was not surprised when every man answered to his call, for sailors are usually that kind. The trouble was that he needed only six men to man the oars. Those left behind huddled together on the ice, refusing to seek shelter without their comrades.

The party had reached the edge of the

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ice, when McLachlan halted suddenly and pointed to a dark object rising for an instant above the waves, but barely visible in the uncertain light.

"They come to us, one of them, anyway. The other body will be coming ashore, but we will wait for this one."

They waited in silence. Sometimes the dark spot rose up against the foam, then it was engulfed by the waves and disappeared. Once the Captain fancied that he saw motion in it, and he strained his eyes and ears.

"By heavens, the man's alive!"

Finally, as it drew nearer and the waiting crew caught the outlines dimly, some of the superstitious grew fearful, for the struggling and approaching form was unlike anything they had ever seen, and was certainly not that of a man. It looked more like a floating buoy, with its bellied center rising above the water. After a time they heard the snorts of a swimmer, as he blew the water from his nostrils, and in good time the blue face and the roseate head of Red Chambers came to view. They discovered, then, that the hump on his back was the body of Chicago Frazer!

Some of the men ran into the slush ice to give him assistance, but he staggered through them without a word. Panting and grunting, bearing the body of the oiler like a sack of meal across his back, he reeled up to the woman, loosened the stiff fingers at his throat, and dropped the body at her feet.

"There's your man, Katie!" he gasped, then his knees doubled under him, and he sank down in the snow beside his burden.

WHEN the officers and crew gathered about, McLachlan silently motioned for two of the men to take away the woman, who was by now weeping hysterically over the motionless form of the discarded lookout. He gave scant attention to the other, but knelt down in the snow beside Chambers and lifted his head.

Chicago Frazer struggled up on his elbow and cried out in a whimpering voice, "You fellers goin' to let me freeze here?" He caught sight of the woman just then, standing between two of the men. "Come here, you, an' give me a lift!"

"Git up if you want!" she responded without fear. "I don't see as they's any strings tied to you!"

Frazer fell back from sheer amazement, marveling at the sudden and mysterious bravery of this creature. The men laughed derisively. He was a bully, and unpopular.

"Mr. Clark, let two of your men help the oiler to Port Austin," commanded McLachlan. "He don't seem to be greatly in need, although I do not see why he deserves the derision of your men. Now as for this brave fellow, Reddy, we've got to do something for him, and do it mighty quick, or he'll freeze to death. The question is, How are we to get him to shelter? The fellow weighs a ton."

"I think four of the men could manage, in short shifts."

As soon as they took hold of Chambers he came back to life and began to struggle. "Help! Help! Take him off!" he cried in terror. "Oh, I thought it was——"

By this time they had helped him to his feet. His wandering eyes finally rested on Chicago Frazer, and he gave a sigh of relief, shook himself like a big wet dog, in his crackling clothes, and grinned happily. After all, it was but a dream, and he would no longer fear any man. "All right, Frazer?" he asked without restraint.

Captain McLachlan took off his seal mittens and drew them on the icy hands of the protesting hero. "Can you walk, Reddy?"

"Sure thing! Why not? I ain't none of your puny kind!"

"I'll take oath to that!" cried the Captain with a roar of laughter. "Reddy, you are my kind of a man! Now Mr. Clark, let us move!"

They started off in a straggling group, the oiler supported by two men, his bravery gone, rejected by the woman, and in everlasting debt to his enemy, to whose arm the woman now clung.

"Now tell me how you got left behind," said McLachlan.

"It was like this, sir. I thought mebbe he broke his arm when he hove up ag'in' the rail. O' course, in them circumstances he'd be in no shape to git to the boats. So I goes over to give him a hand. He's layin' there all in a heap. 'Gainst I gets him on his pins, the boats're gone. I pulls him over the side—" He paused, and turned to the downcast face of the humiliated champion, and added with apparent reluctance, but with a charitable grin of amusement, "then the —— little runt fainted!"

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Looking For Trouble

Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer

By Captain George B. Boynton.

EGYPT

A FAIR WOMAN AND A WILD PLOT

WHEN I finally forsook Australia, near the close of 1889, accompanied by Leigh and Wilson, I was in no particular hurry to get anywhere, but had no thought of stopping off at any point short of London, until we reached Alexandria. Immediately on our arrival there I was suddenly seized with a freak of fancy to visit Cairo, and without waste of time and energy in mental argument I sent my dunnage ashore by one of the thousand or more small boats that viciously assaulted the ship from all sides.

My two companions were anxious to get back among their own people, so they went on to London, while I proceeded to the ancient capital of the Kings of Egypt—those glorious old marauding monarchs who made despotism a fine art, and graft a religion. There I was projected into a most alluringly adventurous undertaking that carried me into close relationship with an exquisitely beautiful woman, which, next to plotting against peace and fighting out the plan, is always the thing most to be desired. As a matter of fact, it is the rule in the Orient, where man is less virile and more devious than in the newer world, that a handsome woman is a part of every properly promoted plot, and this one was no exception.

Under my British name of George MacFarlane I stopped at Shepheard's Hotel, then the home of all pilgrims, and gave myself up to the enjoyment of new scenes while I waited, in no sense impatiently, for the development of the situation through whose coming I had been summoned. It was at the height of the tourist season, following the Christmas holidays, and there was an abundance of company, made of cultured Europeans and a few Americans of gentle birth, for that was before Cairo was overrun with the over-rich. The time was delightfully whiled away for a month before anything happened to indicate the reason for my being there, but within less than half of that time I had renewed acquaintance with the man who was really the key to the situation, though I did not suspect it at the time.

He and I had been strangely thrown together some years before under conditions which provoked rather an intimate knowledge of each other, and when we met on the street one day the recognition was instant and mutual. He did not inquire into my business, but simply asked what name I was

EDITOR'S NOTE—Between this instalment and the following and final chapters in the life of the man recognized as the greatest of modern adventurers are omitted adventures in the West Indies, Venezuela and Central America. This material, with certain other matter, will be published in full in the volume of reminiscences to be issued after the completion of our magazine series—a series fortunately finished by Captain Boynton shortly before his death in January.

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traveling under, in order that he might not embarrass me. He stood in close and confidential relation to Tewfik Pasha, the Khedive, and on that account it is best that there should be no hint, even now, as to his name or nationality.

I wished to see the titular ruler of Egypt at close range and, through my old companion in arms, I secured an invitation to the Khedive's annual ball at the Abdin Palace. This function, which naturally was the event of the year, was rendered impressive by all the artistry of the East and was a most brilliant spectacle. At the ends of every step in the long stairway leading up to the palace stood immobile footmen, who suggested past glories, despite their costume, which was decidedly English save for the ever-present fez.

The only ladies present were Europeans and some few favored Americans, but from wide corridors behind the *musharabiyeh*, or fretwork around the frieze of the walls, the Khedivah and her women attendants had a good view of the proceedings without danger of being seen. They were equally secure from any possibility of intrusion, for every avenue that led in their direction was thickly guarded by offensively haughty eunuchs.

I was purposely close to the end of the long line of people who were presented to the Khedive, for I wanted to study him. He was about five and a half feet tall, with straight black hair, black mustache, an olive complexion, brown eyes that were more than alert, and a rather Roman nose, giving a Jewish cast to his face, which always wore a very bored expression except when he was interested. There was nothing of the brave man in his looks or actions. Polite and insinuating, he was never born to lead; rather, he suggested the favorite and tool of the Sultan.

He spoke English correctly, but with an accent—and with aversion as well; French he loved and spoke like a Parisian. I had been given advance information on this point, so when I was introduced, following a string of Englishmen and Americans, I addressed him in French. Instantly the weary look vanished and his face lighted up until he became almost handsome.

"Ah," he exclaimed, as he gripped my hand with more force than I had previously seen him display, "you are a Frenchman! I am delighted!"

I made some polite reply, and he went on, almost excitedly, "I love the French language, but I do not like the English. I speak it only because I have to. The Khedivah is more fortunate. She does not speak it at all, and she never will learn it."

We exchanged commonplaces for a moment and I passed on, wondering to what extent England could trust this man, who hated her tongue and made no secret of it.

CAIRO has been described so often and in so many ways by people who had nothing better to write about that I have no wish to add to the literature on that subject, but I can not refrain from speaking, in passing, of one unusual scene which, so far as I have read, has for all these years escaped the attention of literary loiterers. With my mind far back in centuries that are forgotten in lands devoid of imperishable monuments like those around me, I had stayed on the summit of Cheops so long one afternoon that my dragoman declared I would have trouble in reaching the bottom before dark. Half-way down I paused for a glimpse at Cairo.

Then, suddenly, almost at my feet, the sinking sun created the shadow of the Great Pyramid, and it began to move. It advanced almost imperceptibly at first, but gathered headway quickly and in a moment it was rushing across the twelve-mile plain toward the city with the speed of an express train, as it seemed to me; I am sure no racehorse could have kept pace with it.

When the shadow reached Mokattam Hill it paused for an instant and then began, slowly and more slowly and with apparent difficulty, to climb the high side of the Citadel Mosque. When it was half-way up the wall the sun dropped out of sight like a shot and we were buried in Egyptian darkness, which, be it said, is no simple figure of speech. In a few minutes, however, we were able to complete our descent of the gigantic steps by the light of the brilliant afterglow, which spread its soft radiance over the land.

AS I WAS enjoying my after-dinner cigar one evening in a quiet corner of the garden in front of the hotel I was approached by three women pedlers, apparently of the *fellah* class. They wore the common blue kimono-like garment, held together seem-

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ingly by luck, and their small black veils were thrown over their heads, leaving their faces bare and thus placing them outside the pale of Egyptian respectability. I was about to walk away to avoid their pestering when my eyes met those of the one who was in the lead, and instantly I was attracted in place of being repelled.

Great, brilliant eyes they were; not fickle and flirtatious, like those of the thinly veiled beauties of the harem who were seen on the Shoobra Road every afternoon; nor sullen or sensuous, like those of the class to which her garb gave her claim; but steady and sincere, wide-open and frank, and in them shone a light that converted into specks the lanterns with which the grounds were illuminated. Such eyes do not come in one generation, not even by chance, nor are they born of the soil. Her face was of the pure Egyptian type, gentle in its contour and refined in every line, with perfectly arched eyebrows and a mass of hair as black as her eyes, and her easy carriage emphasized the grace of her tall, lithe figure, the curves of which not even her coarse robe could entirely conceal.

Her sparkling eyes, turned full on me and ignoring all else, told me as plainly as words could have done that she had some message for me, and, suspecting that the moment for which I had been waiting for weeks had arrived, I walked slowly toward her, as though in a mood to barter. As we met, seemingly somewhat disconcerted by my steady gaze of profound and unconcealed admiration, she drew her uncouth veil across her face and held out her hands, like one trained to tourist trade, that I might examine her wonderful rings. Those hands could never have known work, they were so soft and small; and arms more perfectly rounded were never modeled in marble by a master. Plainly this woman was not of the servant class, to which her companions as clearly belonged.

One of her hands was half closed, and as she laid it in mine it opened and a small piece of folded paper fell into my palm. Long accustomed to ways out of the ordinary, I gave no sign beyond an involuntary start which she felt, but no one else noticed, and proceeded, with much deliberation, to select a ring which I purchased as a souvenir of our first meeting. Not a word passed between us except as to the price of the ring, over which there was no haggling.

The women who were with her made a pretense of showing me their wares, but it was only a show for the benefit of any inquisitive persons who might be watching and, without urging me to buy, they passed on. I strolled after them and was interested in observing that as they approached other guests the woman who had slipped me the note remained in the background, with her face veiled, leaving commerce to her companions. They attempted to make only a few sales and then disappeared.

Curious as to the contents of the communication which had come to me so strangely, but fearful of being watched by I knew not whom, it was some time before I went to my room to read the note by the light of a tallow candle. The mysterious missive read:

> You are Captain Boynton. Are you willing to undertake a difficult and perhaps dangerous mission? Answer to-morrow night through the channel by which you receive this.

Here was a romantic promise of something new and real in the way of excitement, for I could imagine nothing stereotyped growing out of such an unusual beginning, and I rejoiced. The answer to the inspiring invitation, which I promptly burned, required no thought, and as I am not much given to the exertion of energy in seeking solutions for difficult problems that will soon supply their own answers, I did not greatly concern myself as to the purpose of the plot in which I was sought as a partner.

Inasmuch as the only man in Cairo who knew me as Captain Boynton, and who was acquainted with my favorite occupation, was a confidant of the Khedive, it naturally occurred to me that the oily Tewfik Pasha was mixed up in it in some way, and I suspected that it involved another secret movement against British rule in Egypt. The latter suspicion was soon verified, and there never has been any doubt in my own mind that I was equally correct in the conjecture as to the participation, or at least the silent approval, of Tewfik

Knowing the mystery-loving nature of the Egyptians, and feeling sure that if left wholly to their own ways they would entertain themselves with a long correspondence which could do no good and might arouse suspicion, I determined to bring matters to a head as quickly as possible. It was evident that those who sought my services knew much about me, and it was quite as

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important to me that I should know them. The next evening, before going down to dinner, I wrote my reply:

> Yes, provided it is something a gentleman can do, and I am well paid for it. But I will conduct no negotiations in this way. I must see the people I am doing business with.

After dinner I retired to the same out-of-the-way corner of the garden in which I had been found the night before, to await developments. It probably was not long, but it seemed hours before the same three women came up the short flight of steps running down to the street. The one who was doing duty as a letter-carrier, and who bore the imaginative name of Ialla, was the last to appear. On reaching the level of the garden her eyes roamed quickly around until they turned toward where I was sitting. Seeing me, she drew her veil across her face, as though she resented being classed with the unregenerate *fellahin* and wished to show more discrimination in her love-affairs than they could boast, and accompanied her companions in their ostensible bargaining tour among the guests.

To one who paid them even casual attention they must have appeared as timid traders, so lacking were they in the customary insistence, and it was with small profits and no great loss of time that they found their way around to me. As on the night before, it was left to Ialla to barter with me. I again took both of her hands in mine, to examine her jewelry, and as I did so I slipped into one of them the tightly folded note which I had been gripping for an hour or more.

Her jewels were much richer than those she had worn the previous evening, and as I studied their barbaric beauty I softly pressed her childish hands as the only means of conveying something of the impression she had made on me, for I did not know the extent to which the other women were in our secret or could be trusted. Her only response was one quick glance, which I interpreted as a mixture of pleasure, surprise and interrogation; the one distinctly pleasant thing about it was that it contained nothing of indignation or hostility.

Save for that electric flash, her wonderful eyes looked modestly downward and her whole attitude was one of perfect propriety, which more than ever convinced me that she was not what she pretended to be. Finally she drew her hands away, hurriedly but gently, and with an impatient gesture, as though she had made up her mind that I had no idea of making a purchase, led her companions out of the garden.

THERE was no sign of either Ialla or her two friends the next evening, though I watched for them closely. On the second afternoon I received a call from my old friend, who undoubtedly had vouched for me to the people who had opened up the exceedingly interesting correspondence. It was apparently a casual visit, but its purpose was revealed when, in the course of a general conversation regarding the country and its ways, along which he had cleverly piloted me, he said:

"These Egyptians are a remarkable people. I have lived among them long enough to know them and to admire, particularly, their sublime religious faith and their exalted sense of honor. With their enemies, and with the travelers on whom they prey, they are tricky and evasive to the last degree, but in their dealings with people whom they know and trust they are the most honorable men in the world. I don't know whether you expect to have any dealings with them, but if you do, you can trust them absolutely."

With that opening I was on the point of speaking to him about the note I had received and answered, but before I could say a word he had started off on another subject, leaving me to understand that he knew all about the matter but did not wish to talk of it, and that he had taken that method, learned from the diplomats, of endorsing the people with whom he had put me in communication. We gossiped on for some time, but, though each knew what was uppermost in the other's mind, neither of us spoke of it, nor was the subject referred to again.

This conversation indicated that the veiled proceedings were nearing the point of a personal interview with some one who knew something about the scheme, and when I took my accustomed seat in the garden that evening I was impatient for further unfoldings. Not knowing what might happen, and despite the afternoon's guarantee of good faith from a man I had every reason to trust, I took the precaution to arm myself with two revolvers. I had not been waiting long when Ialla and her two companions appeared and came straight toward me, but

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without any sign of recognition. As she passed close beside me, walking slowly, Ialla whispered, almost in my ear:

"Follow me at ten o'clock!"

It was then about nine-thirty. The inharmonious trio passed on into the throng of guests and, as the time passed, gradually worked their way around toward the stairway leading down to the street. A few minutes before ten I descended into the street to wait for them, so it could not be seen from the hotel that I was following them. Promptly on the hour Ialla and her attendants came down the steps and set off toward Old Cairo.

At the corner of the hotel two men dressed as servants stepped out of a shadow and fell in close behind them, apparently to prevent me from engaging them in conversation, which, but for this barrier, I assuredly would have done. With all amorous advances thus discouraged, I remained far enough behind so that it would not appear that I was one of the party. They led me almost the full length of the Mooshka—the main street of the old town and the only one wide enough to permit the passing of two carriages—turned into one of the narrow side streets, then into another and another until they stopped at last in front of a door at the side of one of the little shops.

WHEN I was within perhaps fifty feet of them Ialla entered the door, after looking back at me, while her four companions walked rapidly on down the street. I pushed open the door, which was immediately closed by a servant who dropped a bar across it, and found Ialla waiting for me in a dimly lighted hallway. She led me nearly to the end of the long hall, opened a door and motioned to me to enter, and closed the door from the outside. I found myself in a large room, which, after my eyes had become accustomed to the half-light, I saw was magnificently furnished. A fine-looking old Arab, with gray hair and beard, was seated on an ottoman, smoking a bubble-pipe. His bearing was majestic, and for the purpose of easy identification he will be known here as Regal, though that was not his name.

"I am glad to see you, Boynton Pasha," was his greeting, in a deep, strong voice. He proved himself a man of action and advanced himself greatly in my esteem by giving no time to idle chatter. "We know you well," he said, "through trustworthy information, as a soldier and a sailor, and we believe you are peculiarly well equipped for the work we wish you to undertake. It is a sea-going expedition, involving danger of disaster on one hand and the cause of liberty and a substantial reward on the other. Are you willing to attempt it?"

"If you are open to reasonable terms and I am given full command of the expedition I will gladly undertake it," I replied. "If it furnishes real adventure I will be quite willing to accept that in part payment for my services."

"Then we should be able to agree without difficulty," he answered with a grim smile. "But," he added, as his keen face took on a stern expression and his eyes looked through mine into my brain, "whether or not we do reach an agreement, we can rely on you to keep our secret and to drop no hint or word through which it might be revealed?"

"Absolutely," I replied, and my gaze was as steady as his. He studied me intently for a full minute aud then said decisively in the Arabic fashion: "It is good."

Without further ceremony he let me into the whole plot. At the bottom of it was the old cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians," which is not yet dead and probably will not die for centuries, if ever. It was Arabi Pasha who had made the last desperate fight under this slogan, and it was his release from exile that was sought by the plotters, in order that he could renew the war for native liberty. As a military genius Arabi ranked almost with the great Ibrahim Pasha, who died a few years after Arabi was born, and he was fanatical in his love of country.

From a Colonel in the army he became Under Secretary for War and then Minister of War, in which position he was practically the Dictator of Egypt. With the aid of a secret society which he organized among the native officers of the army, and the carefully concealed support of the Sultan, who had protested vainly against the assumption of authority by the British and French over this part of Turkish territory, he planned and executed a revolt through which it was hoped to restore native control of Egypt.

The French, more sentimental than selfish, and reluctant to take extreme measures, withdrew at the last moment, leaving it to the British to prosecute the war, which they did with characteristic vigor. The bom-

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bardment of Alexandria, on July 11 and 12, 1882, and the rout of his army at Tel-el-Kebir two months later, dissipated Arabi's dream and, so far as surface indications were concerned, established British rule in Egypt exclusively and permanently. The movement which Arabi had fostered apparently collapsed with that battle and he was exiled to Ceylon for life.

BRIEFLY and bitterly this bit of history was reviewed by the old Arab. Then he became more animated. He said the loyal Egyptians had, with great secrecy, been planning a new movement against the British for a long time and that the natives and a large part of the army were ready to rise in revolt whenever the signal was given. The butchery of the gallant "Chinese" Gordon at Khartoum—a stain on England's fame which never can be blotted out—had checked the British advance in the Soudan and to some extent paralyzed the officials who, from the safe haven of the War Office in London, were drawing up plans of conquest, and the conspirators believed the time had come for what they were confident would prove a successful and final blow for freedom. But, to make this ardently desired result more certain, they needed the inspiring leadership of Arabi Pasha, in whose ability they still had great faith.

Furthermore, Regal explained, the superstitious natives would hail his unexpected return from exile as a sign that they could not be defeated, and would fight more desperately and determinedly than before. Through spies it had been learned that Arabi was confined at a point near the coast only a short distance from Colombo, the capital of Ceylon. He was allowed considerable freedom, within certain prescribed limits, and was in the custody of only a small guard. His escape was regarded as impossible, and the idea that an attempt might be made to rescue him seemingly never entered the minds of those responsible for his safe-keeping.

Yet that was precisely what I was asked to accomplish. After Regal had stated the conditions of Arabi's captivity he dramatically declared, with flashing eyes: "We need only the presence of the great Arabi. You can bring him to us. With a ship, whose true mission is concealed by methods of which we know you to be a master, you can sail to a point close to his place of confinement. As soon as it is dark and quiet forty or fifty of our brave men, who will accompany you, will be landed. They will steal up on his guards and silence them and return with the General to your ship. There will be none left to give the alarm, and, by the time it is discovered, you will be far out of sight. You will land Arabi at some point to be decided on, from which he can make his way to Cairo. With his coming our banners will be unfurled and Egypt will be restored to the Egyptians. It is a mission in the cause of freedom and humanity. Are you willing to undertake it?"

Long before he reached it, I saw his objective point and ran the whole scheme over in my mind while he was laying down its principles. It did not strike me as being at all foolhardy. As I have said before, it is the so-called impossibilities which, when they are not really impossible, as few of them are, can be most easily accomplished, for the reason that they are not guarded against. Under the conditions as they had been described the rescue of Arabi was comparatively a simple matter. The chief danger would come from the British warships which would swarm the seas as soon as his disappearance was discovered, for it would be a natural conclusion that he was on some vessel and on his way back to Egypt.

This danger appealed to me, for it augured well for adventure. It would be a game with my wits pitted against those of the British navy, and I did not consider that the odds against me would be overpowering. Therefore I promptly assured the old patriot, whose anxiety and excitement were shown in his blazing eyes, that I would cheerfully assume responsibility for Arabi's rescue and his safe delivery at almost any point that might be designated.

"It is good," he replied, slowly and impressively. "Egypt will be free!"

Profoundly wishing that the noble little *Leckwith* were at my service instead of at the bottom of the sea, I added that I had no ship and it would be necessary to purchase one, as it would be impracticable to charter a vessel for such a purpose. With a gesture which indicated that everything was settled in his mind and that it was necessary for me only to name my terms to have them agreed to, Regal said he anticipated no difficulty on that point and suggested that I return the next afternoon or evening to meet his

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associates, the inner circle of the revolutionary party. I told him I doubted whether I could find my way through the labyrinth of narrow streets.

"How has the person who guided you here conducted herself?" he asked.

"Irreproachably."

"She will signal you to-morrow afternoon or evening. Follow her."

With that he arose, terminating the interview. We solemnly shook hands and he escorted me to the door, and I descried Ialla and her four shadows waiting for me a short distance down the street. Without a word they showed me the course until I made out the hotel; then they disappeared.

I WAS lounging in the garden early the next afternoon about four o'clock, at which hour all Cairo was on parade and the crowd was thickest around the hotel, when Ialla and her faithful female guards entered the lively scene. Her face was almost entirely hidden by her veil, but there was no mistaking her eyes. They caught mine, and a quick little beckoning motion, which no one else would have noticed, told me to follow her. She soon left, walking slowly, and I took up the trail, restraining myself from approaching her more closely than wisdom dictated.

Avoiding the crowded Mooshka, they led me, by a more circuitous route, back to the house where I had been so agreeably entertained the night before. Regal was waiting for me and with him were five of his countrymen. They were dignified and reserved, but sharp-eyed and vigorous, and they looked like fighters of the first water. They were much younger than Regal and evidently, from the deference shown him, he was the chief conspirator.

"These," he said, with a courtly wave of his hand toward the others, "are the relatives and companions in arms of Arabi Pasha and the men who, with me, are directing our operations. They are perfectly responsible, as you will see, and in every way entitled to your confidence, as you are worthy of theirs."

With this formal assurance we sat down to a detailed discussion of the project. They professed confidence that with Arabi in personal command of their forces, and with the active cooperation of the Soudanese, which was assured, they would drive the hated British out of Egypt and keep them out. Their knowledge of the surroundings at Arabi's place of confinement, and their plan for overpowering his guards and securing his release, which was complete to the slaughter of the last man, showed an intimate acquaintance with conditions that surprised me.

I gained the idea that they were working in harmony with their brother Mohammedans of India, and that the latter were planning a similar uprising when the conditions were judged to be opportune. Developments since then have strengthened this belief into a conviction. It is never wise to predict, but when England some day becomes involved in a war with a first-class power, like Germany, for instance, which will tax her fighting forces to the limit, there need be no surprise if the natives of Egypt and India rise simultaneously and become their own masters.

IT WAS urged by them and agreed that I should take no part in the actual rescue of Arabi, but remain on the ship to guard against any surprise by water and to be ready to steam westward as soon as the party returned. I was to stand in close to the shore just after dark, with all lights doused, and it was thought that Arabi would be safe on board long enough before sunrise so that we could be well clear of the land by daylight.

The point at which Arabi was to be landed caused considerable discussion. As the British were certain to patrol the Red Sea with all of the warships that could be hurried into it, and closely guard the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, it was tentatively decided that the safest and wisest course would be to put him ashore near Jibuti, on friendly French soil, from which point he could pick à pathway through Abyssinia and down the Nile, with little danger of detection and with the advantage of being able to arouse the enthusiasm of the Soudanese and other tribes through which he passed.

I was in favor of running the gauntlet of the Strait and landing him two or three hundred miles south of the Gulf of Suez, which would expedite the revolt and also make things more exciting, but the others feared this would expose him too much to the danger of recapture. They were for the surest way and said that more reckless methods could wait until he was at the head of his

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troops. This conclusion as to the landing-place, however, was not final. It was understood that I would receive definite instructions when I put in at Suakin, on the way out, to take on the fifty proud and trusted warriors who were to effect the release of their revered leader.

That consideration of terms was the last question brought up was a delicate compliment to my supposed fairness, which I appreciated. Instead of asking them for 50,000 pounds, as I had intended, I stipulated only 40,000, one-half of which was to be advanced to me for the purchase of a suitable ship. The ship was, of course, to be turned over to them at the conclusion of the expedition. I was to pay all expenses and collect the remaining 20,000 pounds after Arabi had been landed. If they had fixed the terms themselves they could not have agreed to them more readily, and I was asked to return at ten o'clock the next evening for the initial payment.

Our negotiations thus happily concluded, I was invited to remain to dinner, which is the crowning honor of Egyptian confidence and hospitality. I needed no urging, and never have I enjoyed a meal more. The table-talk was general, but running all through it was the love of freedom and the plan through which they hoped to realize their passion. Their interest in American affairs was only that called for by courtesy, but they made me tell many stories of our wars with England, from which they derived much satisfaction.

"We are as much entitled to our freedom as you are," declared one of my hosts, whose green turban indicated that he could trace his ancestry back to Mohammed, "and we will win ours in the end, just as your people won theirs. We may be a strange people," he added, reflectively, "but we are not so bad as we have been painted. The *howadji* [strangers] condemn our religion without understanding it, and preach to us another, which, so far as we can observe from its practises, falls far short of our own. Mohammedanism needs no defense from me, but I will tell you just one thing about it. If you were now to murder my brother I could not lay hands on you or harm you, for you have eaten of my salt, but not even Mohammed could make me cease to hate you in my heart. Does the Christian religion, of which the British are so proud, teach you that?"

WHEN I finally started back to my hotel Ialla and her attendants were waiting for me in the alley, for it was not wide enough to be called a street. They started on ahead, but we had gone only a few short blocks when her four companions walked briskly away and she waited for me in a deep shadow.

"How did your business turn out?" she inquired anxiously, as I bowed low before her. Her voice, which I had been longing to hear, was soft and clear, as well became her, and her radiant beauty shone forth through the darkness.

"Thanks to your cleverness," I replied, "it has turned out well."

"Then you are going to rescue my uncle!" she exclaimed delightedly. Her sparkling eyes flamed with excitement and, as if to seal the compact, she extended her hand, which I first pressed and then kissed. Then I slipped it through my arm and started to walk, out of the shadow into the moonlight, and she accompanied me without protest.

She had exchanged her cotton robe for one of silk, which was much more fitting, and as I looked down on her I thought she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. If I had held the same opinion as to others of her sex I was not reminded of it then, and there was no manner of doubt that I was deeply in love with her. We walked long and talked much, and some of it was interesting.

She told me, though it did not need the telling, that she was a lady and that she had risked her reputation and exposed herself to coarsest insult by appearing in public unveiled and dressed as a servant, out of love for her uncle and devotion to his cause. To prevent suspicion it had been determined that communication should be opened with me through a woman, and she had volunteered for the service. She said she had seen me at the Khedive's reception, which she had witnessed through the fret-work from the apartments of the Khedivah, so she knew the man to whom the introductory note was to be delivered. On her first visit she said she had fully exposed her face so that I might see she was not of the class of her companions and be the more willing to hold commercial converse with her; in her heart she knew her beauty would attract me, wherein she displayed an abundantly justifiable confidence in her charms,

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but she expressed it without the words or style of vanity.

Except for that brief period when she was altogether unveiled, she said she really did not have great fear of being discovered, for it was unlikely that any of her friends would be around the hotel at the hours when she went there, and, even if they did see her, it was improbable that they would recognize her in *fellahin* attire. As a matter of fact, she confessed, as we became better acquainted, she had entered into the plot not only through love for her distinguished uncle, to whom she was devoted, but from a liking for doing things that were out of the ordinary.

It was this same spirit which induced her, on this first opportunity to tell her of her beauty and my fervid love for her, to bribe her servants to disappear for a time. By the light of the Egyptian moon, which would inspire even a lout of a lover, I told her, in words that burned, of the passion she had implanted within me by the first glance of her wonderful eyes, and I was encouraged by the fact that she seemed more sympathetic than otherwise. We walked for hours through deserted streets that were far from lonely until at last we came to a corner near the hotel where her attendants were waiting for her.

THE next night I found my way alone to Regal's abode and received the first payment of 20,000 pounds, in Paris exchange. There was a final conference, and I took my departure with many good wishes. Ialla and her two women attendants were waiting for me, as had been arranged, and my love-making was resumed where I had left off on the preceding night. Ialla was more responsive than before, but when I urged her to go with me to France or marry me at once in Cairo she would not listen. Finally she said: "After you have rescued my uncle I will go with you anywhere, but not until then will I think of marriage."

Nothing could move her from that decision. I arranged to meet her the next night and the one following, and several others, which she accomplished by the popular method of bribing her attendants, but, though it was a joy to her to be told of my love, there was no way by which she could be induced to yield to it until her uncle was free. Finally she regretfully insisted that I must leave, for her relatives, she said, were becoming seriously disturbed over the fact that I had remained so long in Cairo instead of going about the important business in hand. In my infatuation I had forgotten discretion and my promise to conduct the expedition with all possible speed. Even when this was brought home to me it required all of my will power to say *au revoir* to the beauteous Ialla, though I expected to see her soon again and hold her to her promise.

I WENT to Marseilles and, after looking over several ships that were for sale, bought *L'Hirondelle*, a coasting steamer of eight hundred tons that had been running between Marseilles and Citta Vecchia, the port of Rome. She was old but in good condition, and could do seventeen knots or better.

I took command, and my first and second officers were Leigh and Wilson, who came down from London in response to a telegram, bringing with them half a dozen men who I knew could be trusted. The crew was filled out with Frenchmen, and we headed for Suakin, far down on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. There I was to receive final instructions and pick up the Arabs who were to do the manual labor and whatever assassination was necessary in connection with Arabi's restoration to his countrymen. As soon as we were in the Red Sea I stripped off the ship's French name, rechristened her the *Adventure*, hoisted the British flag over her and gave her a forged set of papers in keeping with her name and nationality.

At Suakin one of the great surprises of my life awaited me. We had scarcely tied up when the man from whom I was to receive the warriors came aboard with a letter from Regal directing me to turn the ship over to him and discharge the crew. The agent could not understand the change of plan any more than I could, and I could not even guess as to the cause, but he was there to obey orders, and there was nothing else for me to do. Feeling sure there would be a satisfactory explanation waiting for me at Cairo, I returned there, after paying off the crew and sending them back to Marseilles and London in charge of Leigh and Wilson.

I was still more mystified when, on reaching Cairo, I was unable to find Regal, Ialla or any one else connected with the under-

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taking, nor could I get the slightest trace of them. I located the house in which I had been so charmingly admitted into the conspiracy, but the people living there were strangers and insisted they knew nothing at all concerning the previous occupants. If I could have searched the house I might have found out differently.

Here was Egyptian mystery beyond what I had bargained for. It was as though I had been roughly awakened from a delightfully realistic dream. The only theory on which I could explain the puzzle was that the Government had in some way learned of the plot, in consequence of which every one identified with it had disappeared, leaving it to me to take the hint and do likewise.

IN THE hope of seeing Ialla again, and determined to secure some definite clue as to just what had happened in my absence, I waited around for two weeks or more, until I encountered the old friend who, I knew, was responsible for my connection with the conspiracy. I did not dissemble, as I had before, but took him to my room, told him the riddle and asked him the answer. I did not expect him to admit anything and was not disappointed. He said, in substance:

"Of course I know nothing about the plot of which you have told me. If what you say is true, I should say that you have been making something of a fool of yourself over this Ialla and that you have only yourself to blame for the abrupt ending which seems to have been reached. These women are the greatest flirts in the world. There is nothing they enjoy so much as clandestine meetings at which they can listen to passionate protestations of love, and when these come from a foreigner their cup of happiness is full.

"You thought Ialla was in love with you, but she was only having a good time with you, and she has taken a lot of pride in telling her friends about your meetings, at their afternoon gatherings for the exchange of gossip. She had no idea of marrying you, an unbeliever, you can be sure. It may be she thought she was stimulating you to deeds of heroism, but, if she considered that at all, it was a secondary matter.

"The men you were dealing with have the contempt of their race for all women. They can not understand how any man can become so enamored of a woman, no matter how beautiful, as to let it interfere with his business. When a man who, for the time being, has the leading rôle in a prospective revolution, so far forgets himself as to waste a week of valuable time in running after a flirtatious woman, they are quite likely to conclude that he is too foolish and reckless to be trusted with such an important matter.

"They would argue that no man who could be relied on to carry out their plan would display such lack of judgment. It is possible that there may be some other reason for the situation in which you find yourself, but I doubt it. The wisest course for you is to tell me how you can be reached, and leave Cairo, for you can gain nothing by staying here. It is known to many people that I know you, and if any one should want to get in communication with you I will be able to tell him how to do it."

Possessing all the pride of a full-blooded man, I resented the calm assertion that I had been ensnared by a flirt, but, in looking back at it now, I am willing to admit that probably my friend was right about it. Perhaps Ialla was not, after all, the perfect woman that, under the magic spell of her marvelous beauty, I imagined her to be, and possibly, if I had not surrendered so suddenly to her charms, Arabi Pasha might have been freed and Egypt might now be an Empire. Whether or not that is true, I have no regrets on the subject, except that I never saw Ialla again. My moonlight meetings with her were at least a diversion, and they gave me great enjoyment while they lasted.

Feeling that for once my destiny had played it a bit low down on me, I crossed the Mediterranean and took a French liner for New York. Ialla's loveliness was in my mind for a long time, and while it remained I cherished the hope that I would be recalled to carry out the plan for the rescue of her uncle, but the summons never came.

Eleven years later Arabi was pardoned and returned to Egypt, but his influence among his own people was gone; the fact that he had accepted a pardon implied, to their astute minds, a secret agreement with their enemies and caused him to be regarded as a tool of the British. But, the fires of freedom are still burning, and now and again signal-smoke is seen rising over India.

(Other Adventures of Captain Boynton will appear in the next number.)

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THE bard's place, in the days of bards, was back in the chimney-corner among the women when there was strife and contention among men. He set out with the battle-ax brigade only when the rumpus was over, during which lulls in the manly divertisement he diddled away on his lute or his lyre or his viola d'amour and told the warriors what great fellows they were. On such occasions he threw all reserve aside. Those old soldiers would stand for anything.

You will recall the bard at the table in Dame Penelope's dining-hall, where the princely suitors threw soup-bones and ham-hocks and shoulder-blades at one another's heads in the most careless, not to say ungentlemanly, manner. He didn't get very deep into the eating unless somebody tossed him a hunk of steak or a section of spare-ribs. Even Ulysses didn't think him worth an arrow when he found out his trade.

The bard trade has generally been counted effeminate, along with manicuring, piano-playing and poetry. We always have been ashamed of bards, more or less, when it comes to being seen with them in company. Even now we hide the orchestra back of a lot of greens when the Commercial Club holds its annual banquet at the City Hotel.

Eddie Gibson, commonly known as Banjo, was a true bard. He avoided the strife of the world with great circumspection. Banjo admitted that he once had coupled himself to a job of work. That was in a railroad eating-house in the sand-hills, where Banjo had the night-watch at the lunch-counter. His duty was to set out five plates, each flanked by a piece of pie, for the crew of 109, which was due at midnight. Banjo got the layout on the counter at nine-fifteen. Every half-hour he passed gravely along the line and blew the dust from the pie. After 109 passed he set another line of traps for the crew of 72, which generally made it around 3 A. M. Banjo began by making the whole layout at one time, but had to give it up after a few nights. He said it was too hard on a man's lungs to keep ten pieces of pie clean at once.

After the lunch-counter job Banjo peddled himself around among his acquaintances in regular troubadour fashion. He had been blowing across Nebraska between Lincoln and Crawford ever since the Burlington was built, his old red fiddle in a

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flour-sack under one arm, his banjo, naked as the day it was born, under the other. Banjo said a fiddle was more like a lady; he felt, somehow, that he just *had* to cover it up. Banjo's habit was to walk in, uninvited and unannounced, stay as long as the humor took him or the welcome lasted, then move on to the castle of some other baron. Generally Banjo was regarded by the men as harmless as well as useless outside the field of his limited endeavor. He amused them at off hours, and he was an indispensable feature of their floor-thumpings, so they quite cheerfully contributed to his support, allowing him an occasional bonus, which enabled Banjo to meet the world with a starched front and a clean chin.

Of course Banjo was a fearful tin-horn in the bard line. He couldn't have made good with a medicine-show, and if he had been turned loose in Omaha to play for the drinks, he would have dried up and blown away. But in Broken Bow the noise he made was good and acceptable. It was all a matter of the difference in standards. Broken Bow had its own standard for music and men, as well as Omaha, or New York. A man might be some skates on Broadway but fail to stick to the candy in Broken Bow.

Banjo was a little man, to begin the list of his natural imperfections, and his mustache was the color of shredded coconut. He wore shirts which were striped like a Persian tent, with remarkable, flat-lying collars, and, flaunting around his hard-boiled bosom, always a foot or two of Byronian cravat. Together with the numerous rings upon his fingers, some of which left their shadows behind them when removed, Banjo Gibson was a fetching man among the ladies of his time and place.

Accounting for all of that, Banjo never understood fully the extent to which a woman could disarrange the internal economy of a man until Essie Welch began to make him shiver with her eyes. In love all is anomalous, and if Banjo felt like anything at all within the range of impossibility when Essie turned her battery upon him, it was a hot icicle. Never before in his career had Banjo sung with such feeling. Love had given his ballads a new meaning, especially "The Rustler's Bride," which began:

> I know not why I lov-ed h-im,
> He did not ca-a-a-re for m-m-m-e-e,
> But still my po-o-o-o-r heart won-ders,
> Where-evo—he—may—be.

Essie was not especially distinguished for beauty, and when Banjo first considered the conquest, it must be admitted that his aims were mercenary. Essie was the sole heir to old Jim Welch's hay-ranch of seventeen hundred acres, and Banjo had his eye upon the appanage which would likely fall to his lot in case he could enter the family as the prince. But Banjo, like many a designing man before him, had fallen victim to his own machinations, and it came to the point where he felt that he had to have Essie, hay-ranch or no hay-ranch.

Essie was a long-waisted girl whose eyebrows came together above her nose and threatened an invasion of her face by way of it. They had gone so far as to set foot upon the bridge. Taken in the rear elevation, she greatly resembled an ironing-board, but, when a man is in far enough, the peculiarities of face and form in his adored become lovable distinctions which set her above all similar workmanship in the world. This state of distraction commonly endures until he sees her sitting in the sun after washing her hair, a towel about her shoulders, a mirror in her hand, mowing at her image like a nymph above a pool, to see if it's really a wrinkle at the corner of her eye.

OLD man Welch tolerated Banjo with lofty patronage. What good was a banjo-picker on a hay-ranch; or what good was he, for that matter, anywhere else? Even the road-boss didn't count Banjo enough of a man to order him out to work his poll-tax. Welch found Banjo useful in a way, even then. He entertained the haymakers at night, keeping them on the ranch when they otherwise would have gone to town and half of them would have regularly failed to come back. In haying-time every man counted, so Welch encouraged Banjo to hang around. Long before Welch had any suspicion of the scheme, Essie was making plans to quarter the troubadour upon him permanently. For "The Rustler's Bride" had done its business, and Banjo already felt himself as much the owner of the hay-ranch as if the deed were on record in his name.

His time to wake up came when he and Essie took her father into their confidence. Old Jim was tilted back against the side of the house in a splint-bottomed chair which he had brought with him from Cole County,

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Missouri, offering incense to his plain gods in a pipe that took an ounce of flake tobacco at a charge. Supper had replenished the fires of his broad face until it glowed in sanguinary congestion, suggesting a loosening of the belt.

"Uncle Jim," faltered Banjo, stroking Essie's hand as if it were a twenty-dollar bill, "Essie and me, we've decided to marry, and we've come to speak to you about it."

"Huh?" said Jim (nobody but Banjo called him "uncle"), letting his chair down slowly. "Go ahead."

"Well, I don't reckon," hesitated Banjo, "that we've—that they's anything more to be said."

"*Ain't* they?" Old Jim slanted the question up at Banjo on an angle of challenge that made the bard dizzy. "You mean that's all *you* got to say, maybe. But *I* ain't been heerd from yit! Look a-here, Essie, do you want this here feller?" Essie admitted it, but not with the enthusiasm a fond lover like Banjo might expect. Essie never had faced a crisis like that before. "The ways of women and sheep always did beat me," said Jim. "Now, I tell you, Banjo, you're a good enough little feller for comp'ny, but I got to have a heap more of a man than you for my son-in-law. You see, Banjo, I couldn't afford to board you all the rest of the year jist to have you around durin' hayin' to amuse the hands. I could hire one of them opery actors from Omaha cheaper 'n that.

"Now look a-here, Essie, course if you want him bad enough you're a-goin' to have him anyhow; you're nearly old enough to vote, as the sayin' is. But if you do take him you'll find banjo-pickin's is mighty slim pickin's, and I reckon that'll be about all the pickin's you'll ever have. You can't hang around here and live off of me—I won't support you, and I'll make my will ag'in you. But I reckon you can git a job o' biscuit-shootin' some'rs and make the livin' if you think you can't never have no peace of mind without him. As f'r you, you durn little rat!" he growled, turning sharply to Banjo, "in the mornin' you'll pack out o' here, and don't you never come back. If you do, I'll hang your skin on the fence, you little old tune-hummin' chunk!"

Essie turned away, sobbing in her hands. It's hard to have your romance snatched away from you before you have more than tasted it, in a land where romance doesn't happen along twice in a lifetime. Banjo was almost a man when he put his arm around her, defying Jim to rain the fires of annihilation upon his head. He led her away, whispering such consolation as his tingling conscience could offer. Until Jim's brutal arraignment, Banjo never had suspected that he fell below the average standard of men. In fact, he always had taken pride in being in a class by himself. It hurt like fire to be shown in one unfeeling minute that he had been wrong. And he knew that Jim's summing-up was justified. He hadn't for a moment expected to be turned out with Essie to work like a common man.

THE farther a man is away from paradise, the better it looks to him. Essie and the hay-farm never looked so good to Banjo as they did that minute. A weak man might allow them to slip out of his grasp, but Banjo determined that if they got away from him it wouldn't be because he sat with his mouth open and let the rope spin through his hands. "Maybe I ain't made as much headway in some matters and things as some men, Jim," said he, the hurt he had suffered showing plainly in the pathetic quiver of his voice, "but I ain't too old to start now and make good. Give me a show, Jim. I'll go to the field with you to-morrow mornin' and begin. I'll do anything for Essie."

"I don't want no banjo-pickin' runts around me," said Jim, slouching down with elbows on his thighs, "I want *men*."

"Well, maybe I am a little feller in size," sighed Banjo, "but I never hurt the feelin's of no man I ever knowed in my life."

"Feelin's?" repeated Jim, looking up at him curiously, as if the word had once been familiar, but had lost its connection with his habits of thought. Then again, after a deliberative pause, "Feelin's? Well, a man ain't got no business fetchin' his feelin's with him into Newbrasky."

"I'll not wait till mornin', Jim," said Banjo sadly; "I'll quit you to-night."

"There's the road," said Jim, waving toward the highway with his pipe.

Some one rode up while Banjo was putting his fiddle into its bag. Jim lumbered out to the gate, and Banjo heard what passed. It was the sheriff, and he was chasing Polk Wells again. He believed he had Polk cornered this time among the rocks about a mile away. They'd killed his horse,

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and a deputy was on the ground watching. The sheriff wanted to swear in Jim's haymakers and surround Polk before dark. Jim went to gather the men, and Banjo hurried to the gate.

Banjo knew Polk Wells. Polk had been a brakeman when Banjo had the lunch-counter job. Polk began his career of distinction by robbing the express safe on his own train. He had become so annoying lately that the railroad and express companies felt that it would be worth five thousand of their hard-earned dollars to break him of his habit. Various sheriffs had chased him through various counties, until he had come at last to bay in the neighborhood where he had spent his youth. Not so many years ago he had pitched hay on Jim Welch's ranch. Banjo thought he saw an opening to begin doing business on a man's scale. After familiarly greeting the sheriff he signified his desire to go out and do deeds of daring with the posse.

"Better stay here, Banjo," counseled the sheriff with irritating patronage; "you might git hurt. Anyway, I reckon it'll take *men* for this job."

Banjo went back to the house, fully understanding how a taunt may arouse sentiments in a man which a kick wouldn't jar out of their sleep. Society had given him its estimate of the bard: he was all right for carrying water and hacking up a little wood for the women-folks now and then, but he couldn't train with men in men's work.

Sore as he was, Banjo couldn't overlook the opportunity, perhaps his last, of consoling Essie while the posse was out after Polk Wells. He succeeded fairly well in calming her spirit and reviving her hope, for Banjo was energetic enough in the field of promise.

It wasn't a great while until the posse came limping back, supporting the sheriff and his regular deputy, who had ventured too near the ex-brakeman who had so sorely bungled in his methods of high finance. They were not damaged beyond repair, but the edge was taken off them, and the hired hands had come to the unanimous conclusion that they had been engaged to make hay, anyway. Jim Welch was the only one in the crowd who seemed to feel the situation.

"And they's five thousand dollars goin' to waste up there on that hill!" he growled.

Banjo was leaving. He was in the yard with his instruments under his arms. Bitterness was in his heart, rancor was on his tongue. He had lost all he had to lose at Jim Welch's, so what did he care? "Huh!" he sneered, "why don't you go on up there and take him, then? You're such a —— of a feller!"

"Was you a-speakin', Mr. Gibson?" inquired Jim with grave politeness. "Sounded like the hinge of a biscuit. Well, I tell you what I'll do, Mr. Banjo. If you'll go an' bring Polk Wells down here I'll let you have Essie to-morrow! Yes, an' I'll go you one better—I'll deed you half of this dadblame ranch on the dot. You durn little old sixteen-bore, if Polk Wells was to bat his eye in a mile of you you'd be paralyzed for a year!"

Jim rode away to the station after the doctor, and to telegraph to the county-seat for help. Essie, watching at her window, saw the night erase the troubadour as he struck off in search of a more hospitable hall.

II

POLK WELLS had not stirred from his position on top of the hill, where he lay entrenched behind his fallen horse. Four days he had been on the run before the sheriff whom he had that night put out of business by a bullet through his shoulder, with no time for sleep or rest. He hadn't the strength to attempt a sortie on foot, so he lay still, believing his enemies to be around him, waiting for the dawn. All a man could do in that last extremity was to make as good an end as possible.

Polk lifted himself on his elbow, listening. Surely that was music, the noisy whang of a banjo. "I'm not dead an' in heaven already, am I?" said Polk, grinning grimly at the thought. "Whoever that fool is, he's about to run into somethin' he ain't a-lookin' for."

The music came closer, unmistakably a banjo. It might be treachery, still Polk didn't want to pull up and shoot some fool banjo-player who was just going home from seeing his girl. Just to let them see that he was awake and up to anything they might be trying to pull off, Polk fired high in the general direction of the noise. There was a surprised break in the music, then suppressed swearing, as from some one more

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angry at such unceremonious proceedings than afraid.

"Look a-here, feller, whoever you air," called an indignant voice, "if it's all the same to you I'd ruther you'd throw rocks in place of shootin'! I've got a fiddle an' a banjo along with me, and if you go and bust one of 'em with a bullet it's goin' to cost you somethin'—do you git that?"

Polk chuckled. "That you, old Banjo?" he asked.

"You guessed it," answered the troubadour, "and if it wouldn't hurt your feelin's to ask, who're you?"

"You by yourself?"

"No, I got a lady and a gentleman with me—didn't I tell you a minute ago?"

"Come on over, Banjo," invited Polk, "you've got the humanest voice I've heerd for a month."

"That ain't old Polk Wells, is it?" asked Banjo, with cordial curiosity, as he approached the bandit's position. "I thought I knowed that voice!"

"What a' you doin' out this time of night, Banjo?"

"I been stayin' down at Jim Welch's the past two weeks," explained Banjo, "and the old man got his back up to-night an' fired me out 'cause I had the nerve to want to marry his gal. I'm goin' over to Mullins's. I always like to pick a tune for company when they ain't nobody along."

Polk felt him over for weapons and found none, apologizing for the precaution. "Of course *you* wouldn't hurt nobody," said he. "So you're kicked out, too, air you, Banjo? Kind o' like me. Didn't you know they's been some shootin' goin' on up here this evenin'?"

"I knowed it, Polk. Them hay shovelers of old Jim's said they laid you out. They're settin' around down there now talkin' about how they'll divide the reward, figgerin' on comin' up here in the mornin' with a wagon to haul you off to the boneyard."

"I fixed two of 'em—that —— sheriff and his deputy!" exulted Polk.

"Only scratched 'em," said Banjo.

"Others all gone away from here, Banjo?"

"All down yonder at Welch's blowin' like sawmill ingins."

Polk sat up, back against the carcass of his horse. "Banjo," said he, wearily, "I ain't shut my eyes for a wink of sleep in four days. I'm achin' for sleep, I'm crazy for it. I don't much care whuther I live 'r die, if I can git a little sleep. Will you do an old friend a favor, Banjo? Will you mind a-settin' here with me for a couple of hours, while I take a little snooze, and call me if you hear anybody a-movin'? I'd hate like blazes to be took asleep, like a 'possum."

"All right," agreed Banjo, "jist so I make it over to Mullins's by to-morrow night to play for the dance."

"I feel safe with you, Banjo," assured Polk. "You ain't nothin' but a little old bummin' musicianer. You wouldn't hurt a feller!"

He took a swig out of his water-bottle, settling himself comfortably against the dead horse in a half-reclining posture, his rifle under his hand. "Sorry I didn't git that sheriff," said he; "that feller, he shore has give me a lot of bother." Banjo said nothing. "They'll git me now, anyhow," complained Polk, "they ain't no fair show ner jestice for a poor man in this country no more. So I jist as well sleep. Only I want to be awake for the finish. I could go to sleep right now, little feller, if I knowed I had to wake up to be hung. Say, sing me a song, will you, Banjo?"

Banjo took up his instrument and struck the accompaniment of "The Rustler's Bride." "That's the stuff," commended Polk.

> They tell me he is ly-ing
> Low in some pris-on cell,
> With-out one hand to nurse him,
> If he be sick or we-l-l—

sang Banjo. Polk jerked his shoulders, settling himself comfortably against the horse. When Banjo came to the last lines—

> Oh, take me to my dar-ling,
> May some-times think of me—

incoherent and incompatible as they were, Polk held out his hand. "That there's what I call *music*, little feller!" said he. A minute more and Polk was snoring, the late-rising moon prying into the secrets of his tired face.

It seemed a long time to Banjo that he sat there, almost afraid that Polk would hear his thoughts. "He's asleep now, but how 'm I goin' to ketch him? He's asleep now, but how 'm I goin' to ketch him?"

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Endlessly that question ran through Banjo's mind. He was like a music-box with perforations for but one tune. He considered striking him with the banjo, its heavy hoop and brass screws offering a formidable weapon. "But I don't want to hurt him," pondered Banjo.

Polk's hand had slipped from the rifle. Banjo placed the gun aside. He tried the revolver in Polk's holster. Polk didn't stir. Cautiously Banjo removed it. If it had been two million years earlier in his life the bristles on Banjo's back would have been standing on end. He was afraid. Fear ran through him in prickling waves, tingling to the ends of his toes. But he had made a start, and it began to look more like a one-man job.

Banjo next took the silk handkerchief from his neck, tied it cautiously around Polk's right wrist, drew the other hand to it, and bound them together with many a hard-drawn knot.

It looked as if the job were nearly done. Banjo began to see haystacks and large vistas of mown lands. But he didn't feel half secure. Polk hadn't moved, but he might. Banjo took the coiled lariat from Polk's saddle-bow, passed it around the sleeping man's body—there was room for the hand to work between Polk's back and the carcass of the horse—making a slip-knot, which he drew securely, binding Polk's arms to his sides. Around and around Banjo passed the rope, winding Polk like a mummy.

With each turn of the rope Banjo's courage stiffened. It was as if the spring had run down, and he was winding it. When Polk was safe beyond a question, Banjo shook him until he woke.

What Polk said was highly interesting, no less than his manner of saying it, but both the matter and the manner were inadmissible. Reproachful injury succeeded his first strong outburst of revilement. "And I thought you wasn't nothin' but a little old harmless banjo-picker!" said he. "And here you go and do me this underhanded trick!"

"Yes, if you hadn't throwed that in my face when I first come, I wouldn't 'a' done it!" said Banjo. "That's what I git everywhere—that's the slur everybody throws at me! I ain't like no other human man because I pick the banjo! Well, I'll show some of 'em!"

III

JIM WELCH had stretched himself on the porch after returning from the telegraph station, leaving his horse ready saddled at the gate. Help from the county seat couldn't be expected before daylight, but Polk Wells couldn't go very far afoot, even if he decided to try to get out of the country. Jim felt that they had him safe. While Jim slept, Banjo was herding Polk ahead of him towards the ranch.

Banjo had been a little puzzled over the transportation of all his traps and trophies. He didn't want to leave anything, but he felt that he must have both hands free to use the rifle in case Polk should slip his bonds or try to run away. Having no pocket large enough to house Polk's revolver, Banjo put it back into the holster. "Tantalize a man that-a-way!" rebuked Polk.

The banjo and fiddle were snuggled against the carcass. "I'd like to bust 'em for you!" sneered Polk.

"That wouldn't be a friendly deed," said Banjo.

When they reached the house, Polk kicked old Jim on the leg, at Banjo's order, to rouse him.

"Gentleman here I want you to take a look at," said Banjo. "Go on in and light a lamp."

Old Jim went in, full of drowsy wonder. Banjo heard the women folks rustling around as he waited on the porch.

"Know this feller?" asked Banjo, urging Polk into the lighted room. Jim knew him all right.

"Howdy, Polk?" said he, cutting sarcasm in his attitude and voice. "This here's a fine game you two fellers is a-playin', ain't it?"

"I don't foller you," said Banjo dryly.

Jim ignored him. "You knowed we had you, Polk, so you and this here feller fixes up this here scheme so you two'll git the reward. Reckon you figger you can hire a lawyer for twenty-five hundred dollars that'll git you off, don't you, Polk?"

Polk's remarks were again inadmissible. Banjo turned his prisoner and guided him to the door. On the porch he stopped him, full in the light of the lamp which fell through the open door. "I ain't as big around as some fellers," said Banjo, "and

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I ain't as tall, so I can't make as much noise with my mouth. I jist brought you down here, Polk, to show Jim Welch what a *man* could do." Banjo was unwinding the lariat as he talked. "I've done what I started out to do, and, as fur as I'm concerned, Polk, you can go! This here feller says me and you's a-schemin' to git the reward and whack it up. All right! As fur as I'm concerned, I'll show him!"

Banjo threw the rope at Jim's feet. "Bite that!" he sneered. Drawing his knife from his pocket, he opened it and stood with it in his hand. "Fur as I'm concerned," said he, facing again toward Jim, "a man can keep his word with me or he can break it."

With that he cut the handkerchief that bound Polk's hands.

Polk snarled at him like a starving wolf. "Bring me down here to show me off, you little banjo-pickin' bum!" said he, snatching his revolver from the holster where Banjo had put it, and fetching the troubadour a blinding blow across the head. Banjo's legs crumpled like legs of sand, and Polk bounded away toward the horse tethered at the gate.

Old Jim Welch reached for the rifle which Banjo had stood beside the door. Polk was springing into the saddle when he fired.

"YES, that's him," said old Jim, when the fresh posse from the county seat gathered at daybreak around Polk's body, stretched in the road where he fell. "My son-in-law took him, single-handed, by golly! after him shootin' them two fellers and standin' my six hands off. Polk, he tried to git funny with us after my son-in-law brought him in, and I had to plug him."

Bats

by

Edith Rickert

IF HERRING had not kicked Rafferty as he lay snoring in a shady archway, there would have been no story to tell. But Herring was suffocating and parched with thirst, and he could not pass by and leave Rafferty to forget his troubles in sleep.

Rafferty rolled over, too drowsy to curse. Herring kicked him again and waited. It was the pause that did the business. Otherwise, he would have been a block down the street and Rafferty still dreaming when the song was sung.

"Go to — church!" says Rafferty, sitting up at last and yawning; but Herring only leaned against a cool place in the wall and waited for—he knew not what.

The singer was hidden behind the creepers of a balcony in the courtyard, and the

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words were Spanish; but both men understood, listening for sheer idleness:

"Oh, come away to the Land of the Good,
Where gold lies heaped for the taking;
Under the wings of the Drinkers of Blood—
May Christ spare your soul in its shaking!"

"That's a funny song," said Rafferty. "Do ye make any sense of it? Can ye see the girl?"

"No," said Herring. "Come on in and get a drink. I'm stony-broke; but Peraza will give us something. I wish they'd have another tin-pot revolution down here, with a cash-box behind it! What's the good of your sword, Tim? I got rid of mine yesterday for a smoke. Sell it and let's eat for a change. Say, what are we going to do, anyway?"

"Saints preserve us!" said Rafferty cheerfully. "Drink first and think after. Maybe the girl was Peraza's."

He led the way into a cool, dark room that opened from the street of the little waterside tavern. Behind them lay all Tacarigua, looking like a city of stage romance, sprinkled over low hills as far as the unbroken forest that climbed back to the blue foothills above which Oruba raised her sugar-loaf crest,white Summer and Winter.

Fate dogged them without delay. Scarcely were they settled at their drinking before they heard the song again, somewhere in the recesses of the house.

"What is that fool song?" Herring asked their host who sat with them.

"Who's the girl?" asked Rafferty.

Peraza answered civilly in his own tongue: "The song, gentlemen, is an old tavern ditty, as ancient as the town, perhaps; and the girl is——"

She seemed disposed to answer the second question herself, for she appeared against the curtained doorway of an inner room—a very butterfly of red and yellow, with eyes that warned even as her smile enchanted. She held a tambourine in one hand, and with a sudden bound into the room where the men sat, she began a slow, stately dance of invitation, her eyes never leaving the group as she sang:

"Oh, come away to the Land of the Good,
Where gold lies heaped for the taking;
Under the wings of the Drinkers of Blood—
May Christ spare your soul in its shaking!"

She seemed to be on the point of beginning a second stanza when Peraza hissed shrilly words that his guests did not understand, and she fled like a startled cat.

But before any of the men spoke, she was back again, just in front of the curtain—stood there silently laughing a moment, then with indescribable grace kissed her hand in farewell, and was gone. I think she was Fate incarnate.

Rafferty sighed. He had been drinking faster than the day warranted.

"She is one devil," said Peraza quietly, in English, perhaps fearing sharp ears. "She makes my house hell and my life one living fire—*caramba!*"

"But," says Herring the practical, "is there any sense to the song?"

"Don't know," said Peraza abstractedly. "We all try in time of our youth. Me, too, in my day——"

"What do you mean?" asked Herring. "Is there any such place as this Land of the Good?"

"Terra del Bueno? It's a small island near the mouth of the bay—beyond Guacharo."

It was as if he had told them Bluebeard lived in the next street.

"Well," said Herring presently, "tell us more. Who are the Drinkers of Blood? What's the story?"

"Don't know," said Peraza. "But everybody in Tacarigua believes that there's gold buried on Terra del Bueno, if it could be found.

"Good!" says Herring briskly. "We've no money and all the time there is. It's up to us to find it, hey, Tim?"

When this speech became clear to Peraza, he began to laugh; and much as came out of him—a silent, perpetually-smoking man—more was left within. He doubled up in a colic of laughter that gave him no peace.

"Aw," says Rafferty, "quit now and tell us the joke. My patience won't stand much this weather."

When Peraza could speak, he said, gasping: "The world has never been so empty of fools but that there are some to go digging on Terra del Bueno. My father and grandfather kept this *posada* before me and I have heard them tell tales. I think not many inches of the soil have been left unturned!"

"And nothing found?" said Herring.

He shrugged: "Not what they went out to get!"

He was silent a moment, then added:

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"They never told. Some never came back at all; some were carried back; and some who could walk were touched by the sun and never talked sense again. Wise men keep away, gentlemen!"

"But what's the danger?" insisted Herring.

"Nothing that I know," said Peraza. "Nothing—nothing. And yet—they all find—what no man seeks—in that cursed place."

"I'm going to prospect," said Herring suddenly. "Fighting unknown devils is better than starving, any day. It's time for my luck to turn. Lend us your boat, Peraza?"

Peraza shook his head: "The risk—too great! I should never see her again."

"Then take us over yourself," said Herring. "Look here. I haven't a red cent—or a thing left in the world except the clothes I stand in and this revolver. It's a good gun all right; and I'll trust you with it—for taking us over. It's all I've got. I tell you, I've a fancy to look over that island. I used to be a prospector for a time, and if there's any gold in the place, I'll back myself to find it."

"And here's to ye, Herring, my boy, every time!" said Rafferty, solemnly drinking.

It was plain that Peraza was tempted by the weapon. It was newer and better than could be easily matched in Tacarigua.

Suddenly he thrust it into his belt and led the way out upon the quay, where he began to untie a rotten little sailboat.

"I lend you the boat and take the risk—yes," he said. "It's a good gun. But I don't go."

HERRING and Rafferty were already in the boat. At the door of the *posada* stood a haggard woman, no longer young, Peraza's wife, with a baby in her arms and two older children clinging to her skirts. Herring was looking at them when Rafferty acted—for one in his state, with surprising adroitness. He seized the little man with the rope on the quay above, firmly about the legs, and swung him like a cat into the boat, where Herring turned just in time to catch him and save him a bad knock on the head.

The woman rushed forward with a scream, and the children, knocked over in her flight, added their wails to hers; but it was the time of siesta, and up and down the street nobody troubled to look out.

As the old tub lumbered away from the piles, Peraza fought and jabbered to get free. It seemed as if he would throw himself into the water and take his chance swimming. Oddly enough, he was too panic-stricken to try to turn to account the revolver in his belt; but, had he remembered it, they would have stripped it from him in a second.

Presently he lay quiet in the bottom of the boat, while Rafferty held the tiller and Herring put up the sail. The woman had ceased her screaming and only stared from her little huddle of youngsters. From an upper window of the *posada* came a sudden jingle of bells and a voice singing: "May Christ save your souls in their shaking!"

Both Rafferty and Herring turned; Peraza wriggled and lifted his head; but there was no one to be seen.

The next moment a puff of wind struck their sail, and they were out upon the blue furnace of the sea.

"——!" says Rafferty. "Here's a taste of hell!"

But Herring was looking back at the big, white shoulder of Oruba, which had not humped an inch: "You'd better get Peraza up and make him steer. We don't know where we're going a little bit."

Peraza took it with a better grace than they expected, and toward evening, when they could breathe again without swallowing fire, they rounded a point on Guacharo and saw a mere toy of an island with a strip of good beach of palms and ferns, and two sharp, bare peaks, one higher than the other, in the middle.

"Is that all?" said Herring. "I'll have it mapped out before dark."

Peraza forgot his panic for a moment and grinned; but as they jumped ashore, he crossed himself many times and stood with bowed head and muttering lips while the other two drew the boat up beyond the reach of the tide.

But while Herring stood with his hands in his pockets, taking in details of the situation, and Rafferty was lighting his pipe, he sidled up to them with information: "This is the main trail that crosses between the two peaks and comes out on the ocean beach," he said. "If we lose this, we are in the swamp. My father saw a man step too far on one side and go in up to his neck. He is there yet."

"Well," said Herring cheerfully, "we'll just take a stroll round with our eyes peeled

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to-day; and if there's anything that looks good, we'll come back again with food and tools—get 'em where we can. March, boys!"

He took the lead; but after a moment resigned it to Peraza and fell to the rear. "No," he said, "you fellows had better blaze the way. I'm looking for signs."

They worked their way upward, slowly enough, for Peraza started like a hare every time a flock of paroquets flew from a tree or a snake rustled in the bush. Rafferty took it easily, puffing at his pipe, his head in the air, his sword now and then clanking against a rock. Even so, they had often to wait for Herring, who moved at a snail's pace and was usually at a standstill when they looked back.

"Say," said Rafferty at last, clearing out his pipe, "it's getting near sunset. I vote we turn back for this day."

Just then Herring called them, in a queer, muffled voice. They found him on all fours by a huge boulder raised only a little above the trail.

"Jingo!" cries Rafferty, blowing up like a bubble. "Got it?"

But Herring turned to Peraza. "How long since anybody has been this way—do you know?" he asked, in a shaky voice.

Peraza shrugged, and they crowded at his shoulder to see what Herring had found. He kept his hand on the rock as he said: "See here now, it's Fate—nothing else! Look at the chances against it! I put my foot on this stone to rest a moment and see whether it was a gold-bearing quartz. I saw in that chink a streak of something that glittered like metal, cleared away the ferns and stuff and—look at this!"

He took his hand away and they saw that it had covered some kind of scratched marks.

"What is it?" asked Rafferty, while Peraza crossed himself, staring hard.

"You dumb fools—it's a *bat*!" shouted Herring.

"Let's look at it, now," said Rafferty calmly; but Peraza jumped to his feet and began to dance.

"Bats!" yelled Herring. "Hey? Bats, I tell you! 'Under the wings of the Drinkers of Blood'—eh? What else? We've got it! Call that a coincidence? I thought my luck would turn soon!"

"Hurray!" shouted Rafferty. "We'll roll her over in a jiffy. All together—*now!*"

The boulder slipped away from them into the swamp so easily that Peraza was near going after it. But they stared, blank with disappointment. Beneath it was solid rock that looked as if it had lain there unbroken since the beginning of the world. They pawed it over with their hands and soon perceived that nothing could ever have been buried there. At this stage the chill of the tropic night fell upon them.

"We must build a fire," said Herring, with chattering teeth. He and Rafferty collected wood and struck a blaze on the rock that had so disappointed them; while Peraza brought some bread-fruit that he had noticed.

So, and with smoking, they made shift to fight the pangs of hunger. They talked but little.

Said Rafferty once: "If it lies in the swamp down yonder, it's a mighty poor chance we have of finding it unless we git Government to drain the estate for our benefit."

Herring made no answer, but, after a time, observed: "The bat was flying at right angles to our trail. Maybe there's another path down there. What do you say, Peraza?"

But the Tacariguan was shivering with memories of his father's tale of the man who had been lost, and kept looking over his shoulder in perpetual expectancy of ghosts.

"Gosh!" said Herring rudely. "I'm going to sleep. We've only one death to die."

He lay down near the fire, and the other two presently followed his example; but it is doubtful whether any of them slept much. From time to time Herring rose and made up the fire; and whenever he did so, the little Tacariguan quivered and coiled like a snake ready to strike; and Rafferty rolled over with a cough.

THE dawn shot blood-red through the jungle, and there was a sudden wild screeching of paroquets overhead. The three men looked at one another in silence in the unearthly light, then Herring said, as he pulled out his pipe: "Breadfruit first, then the trail. Bet what you like we hit more of those scratches before the day's out! We'll find 'em if we have to skin every rock on the island. They're sign-posts—see? It came to me in the night."

"Who do you reckon put 'em there?" asked Rafferty.

"I ain't guessing riddles now," said Her-

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ring, as he began to clamber cautiously down from the solid trail.

Near the level of the swamp he paused and looked up with an oath: "Come on, you ——! I ain't doing this job for a movin' picture show. You've got to be ready to haul me out if I go in." His tone changed abruptly: "Gimme a long stick, Tim—anything. No, your sword—that's better. I can cut with that—oho!"

A long black thing wriggled away into a pool of water almost under his feet, but his eyes were not looking for snakes. Poised at the very edge of an ugly patch of green slime, he slashed and pulled at the ferns as the other two cautiously groped their way down after him. He started and almost lost his balance at a sudden shrill scream from Peraza.

"Jinks!" said Rafferty, with an odd gleam in his shifty eyes. "I was only meanin' to scare you, you little tadpole!"

Peraza was shaking from head to foot, as he clung to a tough stem of dead tamarisk, but he eyed Rafferty with a basilisk stare, while his free hand fumbled at his belt in a way that suggested remembrance of his weapon: "You pull me into the boat—one time; you push me into the swamp—two times. Good! We shall see what come next!"

"Oh, stop your scrapping," said Herring, "and look here. What do you call this?" He had gauged his time well to strike amazement into their hearts. They stared, at first dumb, then Rafferty howled out his joy: "By the holy Saint Bridget, it's a corduroy road!"

"Or a piece of one, anyway," said Herring grimly. "The thing is, are we going to trust our precious lives to these rotting timbers?"

"We'll send Peraza first," said Rafferty. "He's small and light ——"

The Tacariguan began to swear foully, but Herring cut him short: "All right. You two stay up there and fight. I'm going on. It's neck or nothing with me. I'm all in."

He plunged ahead with seeming recklessness, tearing and slashing at the overgrowth, leaping as one rotting timber after another gave way, often nearly losing his balance, once sinking to his boot-top; but he did not cry out for help or even look back to see whether his companions were following.

The big Irishman, chewing his mustache, watched him a few moments; then without a word lunged after. He had, if possible, a worse time than Herring, but both arrived on dry ground at length, near a boulder not unlike that from which they had started.

It was not until then that the Tacariguan followed, running almost blindly in his terror. Eight or ten feet from the end, the rotten timbers slowly sagged away beneath his weight and the waters ran over. He stopped short, unable to move or cry, although Herring swore at him to make a dash for it.

Rafferty laughed. "Let the little rat drown! He's no good. One share less," said he.

The words reached the Tacariguan's ear. He plunged forward until the water reached his knees, and there hung helpless until Herring reached out to him with Rafferty's sword: "Come on, you little ——!"

"Gimme my tool!" said Rafferty angrily, before Peraza was fairly safe.

He snatched it, muttering: "How're we going to get back—that's what I want to know."

"We'd better get *there* first!" said Herring, already on his knees, scraping the moss and lichens and other growth from the boulder.

Their search proved vain. Rafferty was for going on at once.

"Where to, you —— fool?" said Herring. "Let me smoke in peace a moment."

Now note the finger of Destiny!

Fumbling on the earth for a sharp stick to scrape out his pipe, he picked up with the stick a piece of moss in which it was embedded.

"Hello!" says he. "This must be growing on something." He turned it over.

The others flew up at his chuckle: "Great Scott, what luck! You fellows better get busy; I'm finding it all, so far. Figure it out, Tim? Another bat—eh? This chip was washed off by a few generations of rain, and lay here waiting for me to come and light my pipe! Let's be moving. We'll find that treasure yet!"

ALL day they worked their way upward among boulders—which lay scattered with a good deal of jungle between—and did not stop for food or sleep. Toward sunset they saw that they were climbing, in very roundabout fashion, the higher and steeper of the two peaks, on the side farthest from the main trail.

They had found six bat-marks altogether

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—Herring three, Rafferty two and Peraza one; and to do it they had scraped every boulder they saw. It was a labyrinthine process; the sculptured bats pointed in every possible direction.

Standing on a rough natural platform just under the crest of the peak, Herring showed how they might have made almost a bee-line from the original trail if they had not been looking for bats.

"It's rather mad on the face of it," says he. "I hope we shall find some sense to it later."

Well, the top looked easy. It was bone-bare of foliage. They crawled over it inch by inch and found scarcely a crevice larger than a hand's breadth, and certainly no bat-marks.

Then the three of them dropped on the ledge and despaired. Rafferty lay flat on a heap of loose rubble, his cap over his face; Peraza sat doubled up, his jaw in his hands; Herring looked out across the waters of the bay to a sky flaming like the Last Judgment.

As he sat there and watched the dropping darkness, suddenly something struck him a soft blow on the cheek. He turned in the fury of unstrung nerves; but the others were motionless, too far off to have reached him. Then he was touched on the other cheek with a tremulous, whizzing flap. He swerved aside and backward, resting on both hands, and so watched hundreds—thousands—of bats—stealing silently from somewhere behind, and blackening the blood-red twilight before they swooped low and disappeared.

When the flight ceased, all three began grubbing frantically at the loose rubble on which Rafferty had been lying. Herring struck a match and they saw that the crevice that had escaped their attention, through which the bats had come, was invisible except to a man lying flat on the ledge; but also that, by clearing away the loose stones, they might make an aperture large enough for the human body.

This they did, taking turns: two clawing and grubbing the stones until their finger-nails were torn and their hands bloody, and one burning matches without which they could not see to work.

When the hole was made, Rafferty laughed: "Here, Peraza, you're the smallest."

The little Tacariguan snarled, ready to spring upon his tormentor; but Herring said curtly: "Look out! I'm going. Keep your matches burning—one at a time. Don't waste. We may need 'em all."

Lying flat, he squeezed himself with some difficulty through the aperture, and wriggled along a sort of shelf. The light was dim, but he kept one hand out before him, and when this grasped air instead of rock, he stopped and burned one of his own matches, noting with anxiety that he had not more than a dozen or so left.

Below him was a well-like cavern smelling horribly of dry-rot and—he supposed—bats. His tiny flame showed neither the top nor the bottom of the cave, but as he shouted, "Come on, boys!" the echo of his voice rolled away as if through a series of vaults. One more thing he saw before his match burned his finger-tips, and that was the top of a fibrous ladder projecting above the ledge.

Confident of his luck, with scarcely a second thought, he trusted himself to it and began to climb down into the darkness. Something broke under his hand and he fell—but only a few feet.

He landed with a thud in soft dust. The next moment there was a sudden flare of light from the shelf above. Rafferty was burning his cotton neckerchief and peering down into the darkness.

"Come along!" shouted Herring. "If we don't find something here, I'll eat my hat!"

He bettered Rafferty's example by tearing his handkerchief into strips and burning one at a time.

Two minutes later his companions had scrambled and tumbled down, and under his directions were prodding the loose dust in search of something solid beneath. Rafferty used his sword and gave Peraza the scabbard. Herring himself, with his burning rags, carefully explored the walls of the cavern, and had just finished the third side, when a shrill echoing yell from Peraza made him drop his light, which was instantly quenched in the clouds of dead dust.

As he fumbled in the darkness for his matches and another strip of cloth, he heard a mingling of hoarse voices more bestial than human:

"I found it—it's mine—mine!" So Peraza.

Then came Rafferty's brogue in a string of vile epithets, the sound of a blow, and, mingling with it, Peraza's shrill scream: "The third time, and ends it!"

Herring made a dash forward and dropped his last strip of cloth.

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The cave was suddenly illuminated once —twice—three times in quick succession, each glare followed by a stunning noise that seemed to echo endlessly.

It was thus by the light of his own pistol that Herring saw them locked together, Rafferty struggling to free his sword arm from the grip of the Tacariguan, and Peraza hanging on as he fired.

By the time he reached them and struck a match, they had fallen together on the soft earth, Rafferty on top. One look at his face was enough to show that he was done for; but beneath him Peraza was writhing and thrusting upward with his knife.

Dropping his match, Herring interfered, and when he had freed the Tacariguan, he saw that Rafferty's sword had done its work well.

AS HE WATCHED Peraza fumbling over a rosary that he had somehow dragged from his neck, he felt the flame of his last match but one scorching his finger-tips. It seemed to him then that a light was his greatest need on earth. He bent over the dying man and went rapidly through his pockets in search of another box of matches. He found none, but his fingers presently gripped something rather better, a candle-end—heaven knows how it got there, or why he had not remembered it or discovered it himself.

By the time that Herring had lighted it and set it in a crevice, the Tacariguan's fingers were still.

It was about as hard a test of nerve as a man cares to be put to. Herring stood still, trying to hang on to himself and think what he'd best do; and into the stillness came the sound of smothered laughter. For one mad second it seemed to him that both dead men rolled and rocked with mirth; then he perceived that a cold gust of wind was playing with the candle-flame and his shadow. He had scarcely recovered himself before he was struck on the cheek once—twice. He turned, half insane with fear, in time to see two bats disappear into the upper darkness with soft, satisfied, purring squeaks.

As I said, it was a test of nerve. Herring set his teeth, muttering: "They killed each other. It was none of my doing! I may as well try to get what I came for."

It was Peraza who had struck something solid through the dust. Rafferty's scabbard, which he had been using, still stood upright to mark the spot. Herring looked at his inch of candle and set to work with the ferocity of a demon, scooping out the dust with his hands. Whatever was buried there was scarcely a foot deep—luck again for a man without a spade!

More quickly than he dared hope, Herring had uncovered a patch of what looked like the lid of a chest. He worked like a beaver; but his candle was reduced to half its length before he got through to the lock and a great ring by which the lid might be lifted.

He heaved mightily, in terror lest it prove too heavy for his strength alone; but at last it swung back with a crash into the shadow where the dead men lay. He fetched his mite of candle and looked in.

He bent close and stared, then he leaned back in a shout of laughter that threatened his candle flame. This sobered him. He carefully set his sole source of light in the crack between the hinges and began a systematic search of the heap of bones within. For, of course, it was nothing but bones that he found. Bones and tatters of blue cloth, metal buttons, a skull, and in one skeleton hand—yes, a fistful of gold nuggets. Herring took these out and counted them—seven, of sizes varying from a pigeon's egg to a pea. That was the treasure in the chest!

Among the rags, however, was a sheet of yellow paper covered with writing in a strong and legible hand. Not to save his life could Herring have withstood reading it then.

It was dated at the top, February 13, 1813, and its message was sufficiently terse:

Whoever finds this chest may know that the contents thereof were rifled by the crew of my ship *Beagle*, U. S. N., and myself, Captain Charles Edward Lowe, shut into this cave, with a loaf of bread, a bottle of water and a candle, for their great deviltry. By some chance desire of taking notes when we landed, I have with me wherewith to write.

The treasure with which these villains have made away amounts to some fifteen hundred pounds of gold nuggets, which necessitated so many trips through the swamp that I had made a road of logs for our greater convenience.

How this treasure came here I am unable to say, but I suspect that it was stored up by the Spaniards, centuries ago, to keep it safe from the Indians until their vessels could come and take it away. Whether they were all massacred or the ships never came is beyond my knowledge.

We landed here on the word of an old woman of the town who sang to us a song, the words of which I do not now remember; and we were seventeen days exploring before we found the lower entrance of these caves.

My bread is gone and my candle is all but burned

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down to an inch; I can not make my way out for the blocking up of this cavern. I can only hope and pray for rescue in time. May God have mercy on my——

Here the first sheet ended, but under it lay another in a different hand, dated October 17, 1870. This read briefly:

Poor old chap! I picked up what I could find of him and laid it decently in the chest, with its handful of nuggets that somehow escaped the pirates.

Here am I who have made my way down the ladder that he could not have used if he had found it because the crevice must have been blocked up in his day. I have found the cave of the bats and won my bet; but what's the use? My boat has drifted away, and unless chance brings other gold-seekers I shall play Robinson Crusoe alone until I grow mad or drown myself in the swamp.

Here's the end of the old chap's ink. Now I shall go up into daylight before they get awake for the night. Bats, you call them? The souls of the gold-bitten, I say! I shall go and scratch them on all the rocks I can find—to lead travelers to the treasure in the cave. Curse that devilish song—Oh, curse—curse——"

Here the writing became an unintelligible scrawl and was unsigned.

At a sudden leaping up of the candle-flame, Herring started violently. In another minute or two he would be alone in total darkness to await the return of the *things*—"Drinkers of Blood"—what?

But it came over him that he would never have peace of mind again if he left the dead men so. He put the paper in his shirt, and the nuggets in his pocket, having in mind a use for them. Then, with almost superhuman strength, he dragged each dead man in turn from among the shadows and got him into the chest, pushed the lid down and had covered it with a thin layer of dust before his guttering candle showed that his time was reduced to seconds.

He paused for a last look and a wordless prayer, then sprang like a monkey up the side of the ladder that still held, and rolled through the crevice into the open air.

He lay there, sick and panting, until memory of the bats swept over him. He felt that they might return at any time by thousands and tens of thousands, and hang upon him and snuggle to him, beating him with their wings, sucking his blood——

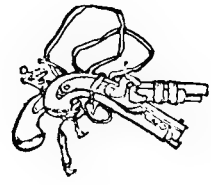
HE MUST have been practically insane when he stumbled down that rocky path. It is almost incredible that he was not killed. He roamed all night long in the jungle, afraid to look at the stars because he saw them as great golden bats; and at last he dropped in his tracks and slept until sunset the next day. Weak and famished, he at last hit upon the main trail by accident—or was it Destiny? The stars were up again when he staggered down the beach to his boat and, pushing it into the water with one supreme effort, somehow tumbled over the bow and fell unconscious into the bottom.

He was picked up the next day by a fisherman from San Miguel, but could not tell who he was or where he came from; and so he joined the ranks of those who never came back.

In time he worked his way home to the States and some degree of sanity. The last thing he had to do with Tacarigua was to send the full value of the nuggets to Peraza's widow—and one of the mysteries is how he remembered her name. He did not know why he sent the money.

Years after, the sight of a bat, or the mere mention of the word, drove him crazy again for days; and the chief sign of his mania, aside from a deadly fear of everything about him, was that he croaked, rather than sang, incessantly to himself:

Oh, come away to the Land of the Good,
Where gold may be had for the taking;
Under the wings of the Drinkers of Blood—
May Christ spare your soul in its shaking!



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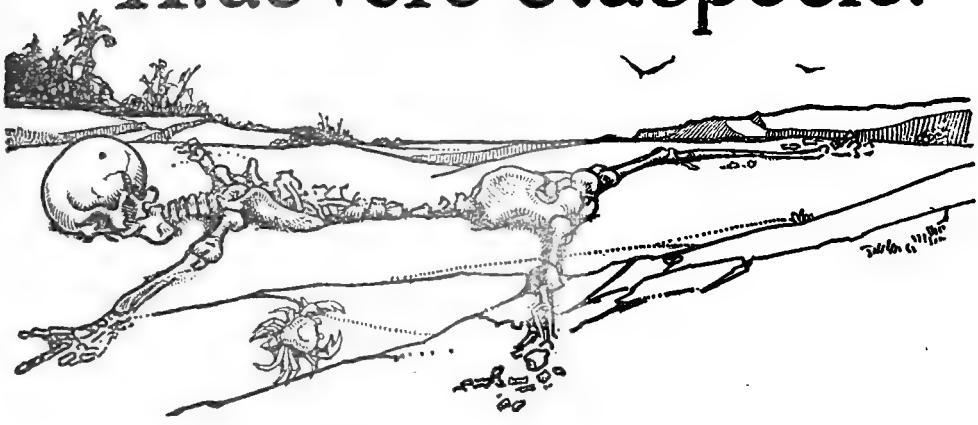
Skeleton Island

by

H. de Vere Stacpoole.



CHAPTER I

IN WHICH VILLIERS MEETS VAN AMBERG

THE early morning sun was just touching the sea, and the foam on the outer reef had caught the first golden rays of light. From the veranda of the Sea-Bat Club-House Mr. Villiers, as he stood with hands resting on the rail, could hear the songs of the Seminole Indian boatmen from the little mole that stretched from the beach into the water of the lagoon; the crying of gulls from Bird Key to the north came across the songs of the boatmen, and from far away through the warm blue weather the whisper of the outer reef to the flooding tide.

The world of sea and sky sparkled like a world new-born, and the dawn wind, scented with ozone and a faint and delicious tang of tar from the boat-house by the mole, shook the flag of the club-house and blew on the whispering sand now salt-white in the sun-blaze.

Villiers stood for a moment absorbing these sights and sounds, then, vaulting the low veranda rail, he came down the beach to the mole.

He had arrived at the Sea-Bat Club only the night before, and too late to meet any of the other members who were there, except Hoffrath, by whose invitation he had come and who was waiting up to receive him. He was congratulating himself now upon being the first man out; but in this he was mistaken.

All along this part of the Florida coast you find these clubs, where millionaires from New York and Chicago, business men from New Orleans, professional men in search of a strenuous holiday, and Railway Kings, abdicating their thrones for a moment, come to fight with and capture the splendid kings of the sea.

From Indian River to Cedar Keys there is perhaps the best tarpon fishing in the world, beginning in March and running on right through the Summer. Jew-fish, barracuda, king-fish and hammerhead leaping shark fill in the blanks left by tarpon. Here, as over on the Santa Catalina Islands on the Pacific coast, may be found the finest fishermen on earth. Kings of sport, like Von Hoffe, Holden, and Colonel Morehouse, who fight the tarpon and tuna with a twenty-six ounce rod and eighteen-thread line.

Villiers, leaving the beach, walked down

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the mole. Anchored in the lagoon were several craft, white-painted gasoline launches and a sailing yawl fluttering the club burgee. By the steps, rocking on the incoming tide, lay a boat containing several Indian boatmen and a young man dressed in an immaculate suit of white drill. The boat was in the act of starting, and the young man had just finished coiling down a line in the bow when, raising his head, he saw Villiers above on the mole.

"I say, is your name Villiers?" asked the drill-clad one. "Good. Hoffrath was talking about you yesterday. He's my friend. He's not out yet. I'm going with the grains after barracuda. Would you like to come?"

"Yes, rather!" replied the sportsman on the mole. "If Hoffrath won't mind me giving him the slip."

"Oh, Hoff's all right. He won't start out till noon after tarpon. He had a big day yesterday. In with you! My name's Van Amberg."

"What's the grains?" asked Villiers, as he stumbled into the stern sheets and took his seat by the other, while the boat shot away with gathering speed from the mole over the lagoon water.

"This," replied Van Amberg, stirring with his foot a double-pronged fish-spear lying on the bottom boards. "There's another one in the bow fixed on to four hundred foot of line. Ever seen a barracuda?"

"No."

"Or a tarpon?"

"Yes," replied Villiers, laughing—"in a museum."

Van Amberg shot a narrow glance at his companion; then he laughed, too. "I guess you'll do all right," said he. He cast a white rag tied to a fathom of line overboard as he spoke, and let it trail in the water.

It was more like ballooning than boating, for the floor of the lagoon, a veritable garden of coral, showed clear as if seen through air—clearer.

"Say," said Van Amberg, suddenly, after a moment's silence. "What have you caught?"

"Salmon."

"Yes?"

"Trout, grayling, perch—I'm only an Englishman, you know."

Van Amberg shot another look at his companion; then he laughed again.

"That's good. I guess you can fling the grains in polite conversation over my head. I guess you've been hearing tall fish-yarns in New York. Well, you wait and see. The waters about here are just the tallest fish-yarn you ever heard, made liquid." Then, crying out in a dolorous voice to the Seminole bow oar, "Oh, Pedro, where are your barracuda?"

"Dunno, sah," replied the bow oar, flinging his eyes about over the lagoon, as if for something he had lost. "Haven't seen spot or sign of barracuda. Strange 'nuff, too. Reckoned to see de lagoon thick with 'em this mornin'."

"Well, try up," replied Van Amberg, putting the tiller to starboard and heading the boat up the lagoon between Cormorant Key and the outer reef.

Villiers noticed that the two boatmen were rowing with a stroke that scarcely made a swirl in the water. Had the boat been under sail she could not have gone more silently.

"Don't you ever fish for barracuda with rod and line?" asked Villiers. "Or are they too big?"

"Too big! Bless you, no—but the grains are the best sport, to my mind. He sees the white rag trailing in the water, and makes for it; then you spear him."

HE FELL into silence again, and Villiers took stock of him with side glances, trying to determine whether he liked him or not, and concluding, at last, that he did.

Van Amberg might have been perhaps twenty-five years of age. He had a clean-shaven, dark, hatchet-shaped face, prematurely wrinkled with the worries of business; an anxious-looking face that had, still, something comic about it. His smile was a makeshift sort of affair, good enough, what there was of it, but insufficient in quantity and often absent. It was as if he kept an old smile somewhere to put on with all the goodwill in the world, when he remembered its existence or could find it.

He was very well off, worth, perhaps, half a million dollars which he had made with his own head by speculations in New York town lots, and he was here on the Florida coast cheerfully recruiting after a nervous breakdown.

He told Villiers this later, as he steered, keeping an anxious eye on the water.

A puff of white clamoring gulls breaking the blue above Cormorant Key struck the

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eye of Villiers and a chord of recollection in his mind.

"I don't know where this place reminds me of—somewhere pleasant. Midway Island?—no, it can't be that."

"Midway where, did you say?" asked Van Amberg, still intently searching the lagoon.

"Island—Stevenson's story, you know."

"You read Stevenson?" asked the American, with a decided touch of interest in his tone.

"Rather! Only wish there was more of him to read."

Van Amberg shifted the tiller to his left hand and stretched out his right.

"Shake."

Villiers shook. He could have laughed, but Van Amberg was serious.

"Stevenson is the only man that gets me and stuffs me with the stuff I want to be stuffed with. New York is the place to read him. He's been little holidays to me in bad times. I don't know what the blazes is wrong with Stevenson, but he gets you and he fills you up with stuff sometimes you don't want to be filled with. All the same to Stevenson. Religion—in it goes; poetry—in it goes; the wildest of grand yarns—in they go like forcemeat into a sausage skin. Then he hangs you on a hook for you to admire him—and you do. Oh, Pedro, where are your barracuda?"

"I 'clare to goodness, sah, dem barracuda beats me. You speak so loud, sah, maybe they've took fright."

"I've been speaking loud because I knew there weren't any. The lagoon hasn't the feel of barracuda."

CHAPTER II

A FIGHT WITH A FISH

BOOM! From the gulf beyond the outer reef came a report like the report of a cannon. There was a break just here in the reef, and Van Amberg at the sound put the tiller hard aport and headed directly for the break.

"Vampa fish, sah!" cried Pedro.

"Did you hear it?" asked Van Amberg.

"That noise?"

"Yes. That was a fish jumping."

"Oh!"

"There you are. You don't believe me! I'll make you, though. Row, you scoundrillos. I'll show you what fish are in these parts. Pedro, will these grains hold a sea-bat?"

The Seminole's teeth flashed white and shining in the sun.

"Hold a whale, sah; hold the debble, sah; hold the cont'nent of the States, sah; hold Florida, sah. Yo ho! row, you black debble!" to the stern oar, a shade whiter than himself. "Put your buck into it, you son o' Jane. Whoop!"

The boat shot through the reef-opening like an arrow, and away out over the blue water of the gulf.

The breeze had died away, and before them lay an infinity of silence and azure poured upon by the tremendous light of morning. The gulf water heaving to the swell looked like a vast sheet of blue satin blown under by a gentle wind.

Boom!

A sun-flash from a far-off spurt of foam lit the blue. Away ahead of them and a point or so to starboard, the water was broken and swirling in a huge ring a quarter of a mile or so in circumference.

"It's a sea-bat circus!" shouted Van Amberg. "Luck! Luck! Here's luck! Now I'll show you. You don't believe in tall fish-yarns? I'll show you one—illustrated, too. Whoop! Rah! Rah! Rah! Give way, you sons of Dagoes! Steady on! Now we're closing on them. 'Nough—stop rowing."

THE boat, carried by the way on it, forged ahead, and Van Amberg crawled forward to the bow and seized the fish-spear there, leaving the tiller to Villiers.

Villiers glanced over the starboard thwart and saw nothing for a moment but the blue sparkling depths; so clear were they that he could see scraps of weed floating thirty or forty feet down. Then, twenty feet beneath the boat, flitting with the grace of a swallow through the blue, passed a fish—a vision unbelievable, unless seen. In shape it was like a bat, with outspread wings; in size it seemed larger than a ship's topsail; black on its dorsal side and tapering to a whip-like tail, it turned as it passed, turned completely over in a sea somersault, showing its white ventral surface, and vanished. It was followed by another, and another; these quite close to the boat, and seeming not to mind it in the least.

Astonished and fascinated, Villiers forgot

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everything but the sight before him, till a yell from the bow brought him suddenly to his senses.

"Look out!"

A sea-bat had risen on the port bow, showing his back above water, and Van Amberg had hurled the grains into it.

Next moment Pedro and his companion came tumbling aft; the nose of the boat was being dragged under water, and this shifting of the weight saved it. Villiers, flung down on the thwarts, knew nothing for a moment; the next, he felt the boat righting herself, saw the line at the bow leaping in loops against the sky as the great fish sprang into its speed, saw Van Amberg's figure in the bow, triumphant with the success of the harpooning, saw him bend and, clutching a piece of tarpaulin to save his hands, seize the rushing rope, heard him shouting that his hands were being "flayed alive."

Then, boost! The Seminoles had flung themselves forward to the assistance of the fishermen; the rope held, tautened, flung up a plume of foam and, becoming a tow-rope, started at thirty knots for Cuba and the blue horizon.

OH, THE splendor of those crowded moments, the feeling of the great tug, the leap of the boat, Death flapping at you and failing to hit you, and then the steady, boiling tremor of the rope and the rush of water past the bow and the breath of the wind of passage which is like no other wind!

The boat is part of the great fish flitting ahead, the taut rope carries to it the vibration of the great fins—almost the beating of the gigantic heart.

"He's shifting his helm!" cried Van Amberg, and he was right. The fish, after a quarter-mile run in a dead straight line toward the horizon, was slewing round to port. Having made nearly a quarter-circle, he altered his course again for a straight line, and headed dead up coast to the East. Van Amberg threw up his arms with a gesture of despair, then he came stumbling back to the stern sheets and flung himself down beside Villiers.

"He's done us, same as the last one did me! He won't stop till he strikes the Bahamas. Pedro, get forward with the knife and be ready to cut."

"Dese old bat-fish, sah, have the very debble in them," said Pedro, taking his place at the bow. "Dey knows where you don't want to go, and they goes there."

"Yes—and I don't want to go to Skeleton Island again."

"No, sah—that you don't!"

"Nor you either."

Pedro rolled the whites of his eyes. Five minutes passed; breakfast and the club-house were being left blue miles behind.

"Let's all boost on to the rope and try to haul the boat on to him, and give him the second pair of grains," cried Van Amberg, with a momentary flash of hope. "We've no grub aboard, and he's taking us to Timbuctu."

"My advice, sah, is, you cut. We'm five miles from club-house now, won't get no manner of good ridin' on his back, and t'other grains will on'y make him run the harder. What we wants is a whale-lance, and we no have got."

"I'll give him another minute," said Van Amberg, looking at his watch. "He may take it into his old flat head to turn by then."

"Right, sah," replied Pedro, knife in hand.

Forty-five seconds went by—fifty.

"No, sah, he won't turn—it's Skiliton Island for the lot of us, and I'd rather be 'scused."

"Cut!"

Plong! The oars went out and the rocking boat was slewed round.

"What's Skeleton Island?" asked Villiers.

"*Oh,* don't talk to me!" replied the Town Lot Speculator. "If the brute had only just headed for the lagoon, we'd have had him."

Villiers took out his cigarette-case, opened it, and offered it to the afflicted one.

"IT'S against the doctor's orders. I don't care. I guess I have no heart left in me to injure. Now that brute will go all round the world with the grains sticking in him and two hundred foot of rope trailing behind him—*advertising* me!"

"Advertising you!"

"Yes, me. He's got the better of me. He's one of my failures. I'm not joking. I take it that way, and I can't help it."

"But surely to goodness," said the less emotional Villiers, "if he does go all over the world, there's no one to see him."

Van Amberg laughed hoarsely. "I see

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him, and that's enough. I'm laughing at myself all the time about it, but things like that mortify me. He was mine, you see, a moment ago, and he weighed all of a ton. No matter. Say—you staying here long?"

"Oh, about ten days or a fortnight. Are you?"

"The Doc said I was to be here a month. I've been a week. I come here every year, you know. When I'm here and not fishing I'm always wanting to be back at business; and when I'm at business and have time to think, I'm always wanting to be back here. Funny the way a man's made! What's your business?"

"I haven't any."

"I forgot—you're English. I'd almost forgotten you were English. What part of England do you hail from?"

"Devonshire."

"I'm a blue-jay for curiosity when I meet a person I like. Always want to know all about them. I guess we'll be friends. I tell you, I want my breakfast like Satan; and we've got an hour's row back."

"No matter. We'll have all the better appetite. See here, where's that place you were talking of—Skeleton Island?"

"Oh, my!" said Van Amberg. "There you go, reminding me of that blamed fish. Pedro, tell this gentleman about Skeleton Island."

"It's the bad man's island, sah. In the old days, sah, the Red Ships used to come an' wash demselves hereabouts——"

"Red Ships?" said Van Amberg. "What are you talking about?"

"I dunno, sah. That's the tale. Dey say the red ships come wash themselves and fires be lighted all nights on Skiliton Island. Then they say, of nights, most in the Fall, you can see the fires burnin' there still, lit by the hants."

"What are 'hants'?" asked Villiers.

"Ghosts, he means," replied Van Amberg. "He's talking bunkum. It's not an island true and proper in the sea; it's part of the reef, surrounded with water, with trees growing on it. I was there last year—and I found something there. But I'll tell you that another time. I was towed there by a sea-bat, same as the one we just cut loose from. Rum coincidence that the same thing should happen again this year!"

He relapsed into silence, and Villiers lit another cigarette.

Villiers was a year older than Van Amberg, but he looked considerably younger. One of the idle rich, with a plain, jolly face, healthy, happy and youthful, he was of the out-of-door type of young Englishman. More suggestive of a picnic than a great adventure.

The boat passed the boiling reef and entered the lagoon, burning now green as an emerald.

As they drew near the mole, they saw a tall, white-clad figure descending the steps, rod in hand.

It was Hoffrath, going after tarpon.

CHAPTER III

VAN AMBERG TELLS ABOUT SKELETON ISLAND

IN THE smoke-room of the Sea-Bat Club that night Hoffrath, Van Amberg, Colonel Hollis, Villiers and Black Joe Scrutton, the great dealer of Wall Street, were all seated in cane-bottomed rockers, with iced drinks at their sides, engaged in the unprofitable business of discussing a blank day.

Blank, that is to say, for tarpon. The tarpon were in, the season had begun, but just to-day the water was clear of them. It was one of the mysteries of the sea. To-morrow, most likely, they would be in abundance, a consideration that brought little comfort, inasmuch as to-morrow would be Sunday, and the Sea-Bat Club was very strict in its rules about fishing on Sunday. You might play poker on Sunday (after six in the evening), you might go shooting, drink whisky, tell yarns—do anything but fish.

The long French windows were open to the night wind from the sea, and a perfectly full moon was silvering reef and lagoon.

They had been talking tarpon, rods, the virtues of noibwood and hickory, patent reels, gaffs—and now Van Amberg was holding the floor with a description of that morning's doings.

"By the way," said Villiers, when he had finished, "you said you had found something on that island you'd tell me about."

The Town Lot Speculator, talkative with a whisky-and-soda, turned with animation to the others.

"Say, did I ever tell you of that island place I struck last year? No; I remember now, there was only the Colonel here when

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it happened, and I was yanked back to New York by a wire the day after. I was out with Pedro and Sword-fish Jack. It all happened just as it happened this morning. We got amongst a school of sea-bats, and Pedro was for leaving them alone. I didn't. I got the grains into one, and the brute, instead of dashing away as the one did this morning, left the water and rose into the air like a bird. Flying like a bird——"

"Flying like a bird?" said Villiers.

"Perfectly true," said Hollis. "I've seen them do it."

"Rose six or eight feet so that his shadow flung itself on the boat, and hung in the air, whizzling his wings or fins or whatever they are, so that the wind of them made a breeze like an electric fan, and so close to the boat that I could have tickled his white stomach with an oar-blade. Then he let himself go *bang!* like the end of the world dropping into the sea, and over went the boat.

"She had air-tins fixed along under the thwarts, and we righted her in a jiff, scrambled aboard, and, before we were rightly in, she started. The old bat had just stopped for a moment to scratch his head and think what course he would take, and that moment gave us time to right and board her. Next moment she was full under way, making up coast with the tow-rope whanging, us in her, half a barrel of water in her, but oars gone and nothing movable but the stretchers and the bailing-tin, which was fixed by a clip to the thwarts.

"We got some of the water out of her, and then began to think of what we'd do. The bat was heading right up coast, same as the one did this morning; there must be some reason that makes them take that way—current or something; anyhow, there we were, for my knife was in my coat pocket, and my coat, which I'd taken off, was overboard. Pedro had taken his knife from the sheath and laid it on the seat just before the upset; it was gone, and Swordfish Jack hadn't a knife. So, you see, we couldn't cut loose, and old man Sea-Bat held on his course, going thirty knots, maybe, and keeping along the outer reef and about a quarter-mile distant.

"We did what I wanted to do this morning, boosted on to the rope, hauled the boat on to him foot by foot, until we'd got close up and could see him swimming ahead like a thundercloud through the water; but that didn't fret him. He kept right on, and kept right on, for an hour. Then he suddenly turned for the open sea, and the next thing we knew was the boat was over and we were swimming.

"We made for the reef, and landed after a bit of a struggle. Then we found that the place we were on was an island. The reef had broken up here, making an island of itself, with some mangroves and bushes and things.

"Pedro said he knew the place; it had a native name which meant the island of something-or-another fires. We were most starved to death there, till a boat full of Indians from one of the clubs further up the coast took us off next morning.

"The thing I found there was a skeleton."

HE PAUSED to light a cigarette, forgetful, evidently, of the doctor's orders, and went on.

"I was hunting about for water when I found it. It was spread-eagled."

"It was which?" asked Colonel Hollis.

"Spread-eagled—look, like this."

He rose from his chair and lay down on the parquet of the floor, spreading out his arms and legs till he looked like a star-fish.

"Oh, I take your meaning," said Hoffrath. "Proceed."

"That's all," said Van Amberg, rising and taking his chair. "But I tell you it made me feel funny, for the fellow that skeleton belonged to must have been tied like that before he died, and left, maybe, to starve. The thing was face down."

"He may have fallen dead face downwards," said Scrutton.

"He may. But is there ever a man found dead spread-eagled like that?"

"He may have died on Thanksgiving Day," said Hoffrath.

JUST before turning in, Van Amberg and Villiers took a stroll on the sands.

"I'm beginning to wish I was an Englishman," said Van Amberg. "I'm about sick of the average American, who makes a joke out of everything he can't make a dollar out of. That old skeleton was *mine*, —— it! Had it in my mind as a sort of possession, and now that I've taken it out and shown it, it's lost its value, lost its perfume. I used to tell myself stories about it. Wish I'd kept it to myself!"

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"I don't. I think it's jolly interesting, and I think you were right."

"How?"

"I don't see how it could have been fixed like that unless it was tied. And no one would go to the trouble to tie a corpse like that."

"Now you're talking. You've got just what was in my mind."

"The question is, what was he tied to?"

"Yes, that's good, Sherlock Holmes. Dig into it and think some more."

"Were there any trees near by?" went on Sherlock Holmes. "Near enough for him——"

"No, there weren't. He was lying on rock among some bent-grass stuff; then there were bay-cedar bushes; then, beyond the bushes, there were some trees, mangroves and a palm. No, they couldn't have tied him to tree-trunks. What *did* they tie him to?"

"I give it up," said Villiers. He was thinking less of the skeleton than of Van Amberg, this business man who had so much of the child about him; so much of the child's love of the marvelous and far-fetched, so much of the child's acquisitiveness.

The great Florida moon lit the white beach and cast their shadows before them as they walked, lit the lagoon and the sea beyond, while the tune of the reef filled the night with whispers of romance.

CHAPTER IV

"PIECES OF EIGHT—PIECES OF EIGHT"

NEXT morning Villiers was seated after breakfast in the veranda, smoking a cigar and reading a book, when Van Amberg appeared with an unlit cigar between his teeth and his hands in his pockets.

The American nodded to his friend, said something about the weather, which was superb, and then stood with his hands on the veranda rail, looking out over the sea.

Then he took half a dozen paces up and down the veranda. He seemed like a man with something on his mind. Suddenly he stopped opposite Villiers.

"Walk down to the mole?"

"I don't mind."

"Look here," said Van Amberg when they were half-way down the sands, "I don't know whether it was our talk, but I've been dreaming all night, same as if I'd been doped. That's the worst of me—when I get overexcited I either lie awake all night or dream, and I don't know which is worse. See here——"

"Yes?"

"I dreamed I was on that island—you were there, too, but you weren't yourself. Guess who you were."

"Can't."

"Long John Silver. You had his wooden leg and you were leaning on a crutch; but it was your face and voice all right. I was there, of course. And guess who I was——"

"Let's see," said Villiers, calling up recollections of "Treasure Island" and its characters. "The doctor chap—what's his name?"

"Livesey. No—try again."

"The fellow that was marooned?"

"Ben Gunn. No. I was Jim Hawkins."

"The boy?"

"Yes. Fancy me Jim Hawkins!" Van Amberg laughed hoarsely. "Jim Hawkins! And still I was myself, you know. Well, there we were, you and I, kneeling by the skeleton, and Captain Flint's parrot was in a tree, shouting out, 'Twenty yards in a straight line from the finger-tip. Pieces of eight, pieces of eight.' And you took a measuring-tape from your pocket and began measuring in a straight line from the right finger-tip along the way the arm was pointing, and the tape kept wriggling about as if it was alive. I say—what are pieces of eight?"

"I don't know. I think they are silver coins—yes, I'm sure they are, for I read so somewhere."

"Bust it!" said Van Amberg. "I thought they were gold. Well, anyhow, that was the dream, and Hoffrath came along in a boat and spoiled it all, and I woke up. It was three o'clock in the morning, and I couldn't get asleep again, but kept figuring on it and working over it till my nerves feel like the name of a pub. I saw in England once. 'The Cat and Racket' they called it."

THEY had reached the mole, and they took their seat on a balk of timber with the burning green lagoon before them, the blue, blue sea peeping beyond the line of reef foam, and the gulls wavering and wandering and crying on the sea wind.

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"Look here," said Van Amberg suddenly, producing a match-box and lighting his cigar, "there's boodle on that island."

Villiers came back from a reverie into which the dazzling beauty of the morning had drawn him. "Money?"

"I don't know about money. Stuff, jewelry, heaven knows what. I've been working at the thing ever since I woke. I don't say it's there to be found, but I've got a feeling in my bones it's there. I've been scratching up the whole thing. See here, what did Pedro mean by the Red Ships going there? It was an Indian yarn and he didn't know the meaning himself. But I know."

"You?"

"Yes. It's plain as a dollar in a glass. Red ships—what else could they be but the old pirate ships, red with blood, putting in to wash and clean up?"

"Good Lord!" said Villiers. "You don't believe that?"

"Believe what?"

"All those old pirate tales."

"'Course I believe them. They're history. I guess there's nothing truer. Mind you, I don't believe these chaps were such mud-turtles as to go burying their treasure and leaving it hid with nothing to show for it but a cryptogram; but I believe there is stuff to be found——"

"In Skeleton Island, for instance?"

"Well, yes—there as likely as anywhere else."

Villiers looked round him at the lagoon, —green by the mole, blue where the water deepened out by Cormorant Key; at the lonely reef telling its eternal tale of the sea's unrest; at the white flying gulls snowing the flower-like blue of the sky.

Tarpon fishers, New York brokers, clubhouses, all the fustian of civilization, vanished for a moment, and the sea before him became what it was, the Sea of Romance.

The topsails of Horne had once broken that horizon.

"How far is that place off?"

"Twenty or twenty-five miles up the coast."

"Let's go there and dig."

"Heu!" said Van Amberg. "What for? —potatoes?"

"No. Treasure."

"Nice-looking fools we'd be! I guess I'd be guyed out of New York. No, I've come here for tarpon."

Before Villiers could reply, a step sounded behind them. It was Hoffrath, pipe in mouth, come to propose a sail.

Sailing was allowable on Sundays.

They went for a two-hours' sail, and Hoffrath talked tarpon to his heart's content; talked without cessation, till the two younger men began to see nothing of the coast and sea except gigantic letters mile-high and all-obliterating—

T A R P O N!

Hoffrath was that sort of person.

CHAPTER V

THE TREASURE CHARTER

THAT night, having lost some forty-five dollars or so at poker, Villiers was sitting up in bed, with a pipe in his mouth, and a book on his knees, when a knock came at the door, and Van Amberg in pajamas made his appearance.

"May I come in? You're sure I'm not worrying you? What's the book?"

"Macaulay."

"Look here," said Van Amberg, taking his seat in a cane rocker, "it struck me as we were playing poker to-night, nearly every game is bluff or pretense. I'm dead sick of the old games—let's try a new one."

"What's that?"

"When I spoke to you this morning I was dead sure there was boodle on that island. I'd worked myself up. I said to myself, 'Those old sea-bats tried to drag you there. One did, and the other tried to; you've dreamt that dream; that skeleton wasn't put there for nothing; his right arm is pointing to the treasure, sure.' Then I remembered that the skeleton in 'Treasure Island' was laid out as a pointer, and when you proposed going to the place this morning, I said to myself, 'It's "Treasure Island" flopping about in your noddle that made you dream all that. It's the pretense of a pretense.' All the same, let's have some fun out of it. Look here, Dr. Livesey, let's get a pick and shovel bright and early to-morrow, some grub, take a boat and a tent and have a two days' picnic. We'll measure twenty yards from the blessed old finger-tip and dig for the fun of the thing. What do you say?"

Villiers laughed.

Had Van Amberg's fear of ridicule driven him to this method of approaching the busi-

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ness, or was he in earnest in suggesting it as a game? His answer was prompt.

"I'm with you, Jim Hawkins!" he replied. "Give me the tobacco-pouch—anything for a change, and it will be something to say one has hunted for treasure on the Florida coast."

"You're the sort!" said the Town Lot Speculator, his eyes lighting. "I thought you'd fall in. But, look here, you can say what you like when you go back to England, but don't talk here."

"Why not?"

"Because, do you see, these fellows wouldn't understand. They'd think we'd started treasure-hunting in dead earnest; they aren't built to understand my meaning, —couldn't catch the butterfly in the thing, and I'd never hear the end of it. Hoffrath on a holiday knows nothing about anything but tarpon; other times he's a bank president and knows nothing about anything but banks. The rest are the same in their way. You're not in a club-house here, you're in a private lunatic asylum, where all the patients are suffering from the same complaint—tarpon."

"I see. I won't split."

"Right. And now let's get to work. You don't want to go to sleep for half-an-hour or so? Good! You wait a moment." He left the room and returned with a fountain pen and blotting-pad and some notepaper. "I'll have to knock the club steward up before dawn and get the provisions for the picnic—must have a list of them. We must get a tent for the camping out, a pick and shovel for the other thing. Let's see: what else? Oh, yes; you must take your tarpon rod and I mine, for appearance' sake, and I'll take my little rifle to shoot the buccaneers with. What else? Water. Yes, we must take a couple of stone jars of water. I don't think there's any on the island. You don't want whisky, do you? All the same, we'll take a bottle, for fear of chills. That's about all."

HE HAD been writing the items down on a sheet of paper. He paused and read over what he had written. "That's all right. Now comes the most important thing."

He took another sheet of paper and, placing it on the blotting-pad, began to write rapidly.

Villiers, sitting up in bed smoking, watched him as he wrote, and wondered what he was writing about. He had the air of a person writing verse or prose of an inspired nature.

"What's your Christian name?" asked the scribe suddenly.

"John."

Van Amberg went on writing. Then he stopped and began to read what he had written:

"'We, the undersigned, Theodore V. Van Amberg, of 23 East 32d Street, New York City, and John Villiers, of Devonshire, England'—sounds like a thing out of 'Westward Ho!' doesn't it?—'being now engaged in fitting out an expedition'—that means we're sharing alike in it and you pay for half the grub and any damage to boat or implements. You agree to that, don't you?"

"Certainly," laughed Villiers, tickled by this mixture of old romance and American business methods. "Certainly. Heave ahead."

"' — to search for treasure on the coast of Florida at a place named Skeleton Island, do hereby agree to equally divide all findings'—That somehow doesn't sound well. What do you think?"

"It's not exactly a classical word. Why not say 'treasure'?"

The humor of Van Amberg's mentality, his thirst for Romance (which is one of the weakest and most charming points in the American character), the reality of his make-believe—all were fully exhibited in the boggling over the literary style of a document condemned to oblivion. Villiers could have laughed, only for the seriousness of the other. Instead, he smoked hard and watched the Town Lot Speculator in his wrestle with style.

"I've put in 'treasure' before. You can't have it twice in two lines. I know!—'whatever of value they may find.' That puts the thing in blinkers, avoids side issues; if we find an old rusty frying-pan or if we find the crown of England, it's all the same. We go halves."

"Right. But suppose we find jewels in old settings, and old plate," said Villiers, falling into Van Amberg's vein and half surprised to find that, despite the knowledge of pretense, there was still in the business a glow of the real thing, as though men driven from a palace into the cold realities of the world had found the embers of a wayside fire and some of the warmth of old days.

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"That's where the rub would come. I don't know the laws of the United States about treasure-trove. I rather suspect the Government would collar the boodle and give us ten per cent. toward our expenses. If we found things like that, we'd have to get them valued very carefully; we'd have to take them one by one to people in shady streets—Tiffany's would be a bit too open.

"But when we've once got the stuff I guess it will be time enough to figure on the way to get rid of it; or we can work the problem out in the boat to-morrow—problems like that are half the charm of a business like this, *and* the uncertainty. Have you ever noticed that all the interest in life is in what you are going to get, not what you have? It is. And have you ever noticed in a treasure story that the interest is keen as paint all along till they find the stuff? Then the interest fizzles out. Did you ever notice how poor the find looks when it's found? It's the uncertainty makes the interest of the thing. Well, come on and sign the blessed charter—that's a good name, 'charter'—better than 'agreement'; more flavor to it."

He handed the document to Villiers, who signed; then he appended his own signature, blotted it, and folded the paper.

"Who's to keep it?"

"You do."

"Right. I'll be the depository. I've talked you almost asleep."

"Not a bit," said Villiers, yawning. "I—oh, lord! it's the air of the place, I believe. I—yaw—ow——"

"Dowse the glim," said Van Amberg, popping out the lamp. "I'll call you bright and early."

He scuttled off, and Villiers fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI

THE "HISPANIOLA" SAILS

HE WAS awakened by the light of a candle. Van Amberg, fully dressed and wearing a Panama hat, was standing over him.

"It's half-an-hour to sun-up," said the American. "I've routed the club steward up and he's cursing himself into his breeches. I've got the boat bailed out and ready at the mole steps; it's half-tide, and there's a good sailing wind."

"Oh, ——!" said Villiers.

"That's what the club steward said. I guess I know how you feel, but you'll be all right, once you're out."

"I thought you were joking last night," said Villiers, with a weak attempt to evade the inevitable.

"So I was—all the same I was in earnest. Come; rise up, William Riley. The *Hispaniola* is loosing her topsails——"

Villiers arose, and Van Amberg hurried off to complete his preparations.

Ten minutes later Villiers came out, fully dressed and still grumbling. The moon had sunk and the stars and the wind and the sea had the last moments of the night to themselves. The speaking sea, the blowing wind, the leaping stars, the lagoon all a-shiver with wind and starlight—ah! that picture alone was worth a year of commonplace life in cities.

Van Amberg was not to be seen, but on the veranda steps was seated a figure in an attitude of despondency, and by the figure was piled a bundle of things done up in what seemed a table-cloth.

"Do you know where Mr. Van Amberg is?" asked Villiers, approaching the despondent figure.

"Nope."

It was the club steward, half dressed and short of temper.

"You've seen him?"

"Yep." Then, bursting out, "I guess I *have* seen him—I don't mind—I don't mind them going after tarpon any hour they please, as they do, but I'm not here to arrange picnics in the middle of the night. Dragging a man out of his bed——" He rose to his feet as Van Amberg appeared round the corner from the back premises, with a spade over his shoulder.

"Come on," said Van Amberg. "We've everything now. Come on, Simmons, and shoulder your bundle like a man. It'll soon be over, and you can get back to bed."

Simmons, still growling, took up his bundle and they were on the point of starting, when a window shot open above.

"Hullo, you fellows!" came Hoffrath's voice. "What are you after?"

"Tarpon," said Van Amberg.

"Oh!" Then, after a pause, "Are you going to *dig* for them?"

"Come on," said Van Amberg. "It's too early in the morning to start repartee."

They heard a chuckle and the closing of Hoffrath's window.

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In a minute they were on the mole, and in half a minute more Van Amberg was in the boat, stowing away the provisions and the implements, which included the pole and canvas of a small bell tent.

"We haven't forgotten anything, Simmons?"

"Nope."

The surly one apparently was still unappeased. He retreated up the steps as they pushed off and took to the oars, and as the boat shot out across the starlit lagoon they saw his figure passing sullenly away along the mole.

"Wet blanket!" said Van Amberg.

THEY opened the great sweep of star-stricken water between Cormorant Key and the outer reef; they passed the break in the outer reef, which was sighing to the incoming tide, and then the Gulf swell took them, and the great silences which made the reef a restlessly fretting thread.

They took in the oars, and Van Amberg stepped the mast and hoisted the sail. The wind was almost dead aft.

Van Amberg steered. Only the warble of water at the bow, the "live" feel of the boat and the gentle hiss of foam told them they were in motion. From where Villiers sat in the stern sheets, the lug-sail showed a trapezium of blackness against the shining stars.

"Look!" said Van Amberg.

In the east, like a lilac-tinted wind stealing under the night, paling the sky and shivering across the sea, the dawn was coming from away beyond the Bahamas. In a moment the sky lost the violet of night and the sea showed her distances, tremendous spaces of mournful gray-blue light, cold for a moment and then burning into dazzling azure and the blazing gold of the slowly rising sun.

Before the crest of the sun had truly broken the sea-line, gulls, passing above, caught his light and flew rose-red against a sky of aquamarine; the crying of the frigate-birds from the reef came spirit-like across the water; the sail took a touch of rose, and then suddenly shook out to the sunlight as the horizon changed to a bar of dazzling gold.

With the rising sun the wind failed and died away, leaving the boat adrift in the hot blue morning.

CHAPTER VII

SKELETON ISLAND

"I NEVER reckoned on this," said Van Amberg. "Five miles out, and becalmed already! I guess the *Hispaniola* is beginning her tricks, and it promises to be a blazing hot day."

"What shall we do?"

"Get the sweeps out and row her."

He began to unstep the mast.

"Twenty miles!" said Villiers.

"There or thereabouts," said Van Amberg grimly.

Villiers looked at the almost Caribbean-blue sea, stainless, unflecked by sail; at the reef to port, with the white foam flashing in the sun; the white gulls flitting above the foam and against the sun-smitten coast beyond; then, unshipping the rudder at Van Amberg's direction, he resignedly took the stern oar.

"We can breakfast after we pass that point," said the American, pointing far ahead to where the coast projected a spur into the sky-blue sea.

Than the Caribbean there is nothing bluer on earth, and the Gulf is a pale sister of the Caribbean; the northern boundary of the tropic of Cancer cutting Matanzas and the limit of the hundred-fathom water off Cape Catoche strains some of the indigo, some of the dazzle from the waters that pass through the Straits of Yucatan, leaving blues and green enough and to spare, however, for the great sapphire of the Gulf and the thousand emeralds of the lagoons.

It was toward midday, and a light breeze that had sprung up had given them relief from the oars. Van Amberg was steering, and they had just opened a bay where the coast-line showed low hills and the charm of distant orange groves.

"There's Skeleton Island," said Van Amberg, pointing ahead.

Villiers looked, but could see nothing in the form of an island.

"It's so close to the coast it doesn't show up. You see all that reef-water? Well, there—that clump of trees that seem growing on the reef, that's it. There's a lagoon behind it forty foot deep, scoured out by the tides; beyond the lagoon there's a key, and beyond the key there's more water before you get to the coast. I guess the old pirates, if there's any truth in Pedro's yarn,

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used to get their ships into the lagoon behind the island for a wash and brush-up. There are shallow patches in the lagoon, where they would careen their ships and clean the weeds off their copper at low tide. It's the bulliest place for a pirates' island out of a boy's story-book.

"Say, wouldn't it be a joke to turn pirate there? Get a fast launch and go after the tarpon bugs? Not that you'd get much off them, but one might hold them to ransom, and the sea about here is simply floating with Railway Kings and Bank Presidents, to say nothing of Pork-Packers and Oil Trust men. You'd only have to skim the water once to net a million dollars, and the magazines would give you half another million for the story of how you did it."

"Let's!" said Villiers, laughing.

HE WAS scarcely listening to the other; the sight of their objective was holding him; the absurdity of the expedition was forgotten. There was something in this bit of coast, some touch of wildness in the broken reef-water, something of boldness in the voluptuous coloring, something of mystery in those trees, something that brought Romance half in view.

The mirage of the Past seemed to hang over that blue-washed desolate coast, untouched and untroubled by the fuss and noise of the commonplace Present. One could see the damaged pirate ships being warped to their anchorage behind those mangroves, and the voices of the terns coming now on the breeze from the key behind the island were the very voices of the men tramping at the capstan-bars.

Yes, the red ships came here once, if there was any truth in the face and the fitness of things.

That the spirit of Place was hovering above the American as well as Villiers and the fact that make-believe was departing soon became apparent from his words:

"If that skeleton had been left as a marker by those guys, it would have rotted away by this—wouldn't it?"

"Upon my word, I don't know. Skeletons ought to last a good while—oughtn't they?"

"I've never figured much on skeletons; they're hard enough to stand the weather, I should think. When were the pirates last about these parts? I've clean forgotten—never knew, in fact. They stuff a fellow up in school with a lot of history rubbish, like the doings of Henry the Eighth, and they leave out all the warm spots. Would it be a hundred years?"

"It might be."

The voices of the gulls were now loud, and the tune of the surf. The Island might have been a quarter of a mile long; a dozen mangroves, a palm and some bay-cedar bushes seemed to make up the vegetation. The swell was curling in gently on a beach of coral sand.

Van Amberg unstepped the mast.

"We'll row her in. I won't beach her; we can fasten her to a mangrove root at the back; it's forty-foot water there and as calm as a pond."

"Right," said Villiers.

They skirted the shore and, rounding the eastern end, passed into the lagoon. It was low tide and still water; with the flooding tide there would be a strong current here, but now, under the afternoon sun, the lagoon was like a mirror, and great silence lay hazy and hot upon the key to landward and the coast beyond.

Silence, marked only by the crying of the terns and frigate-birds over the key.

"Can't you see them mooring their ships here?" said Van Amberg, as he tied on to a root. "Come on; we can land the boat and the stores later; I'm mad to see if that thing is there still!"

He went to the bow and rooted out the shovel and the pick and a round, flat object which was nothing less than the club measuring-tape—the sacred tape used for measuring the tarpon and tuna, the Jew-fish and the shark, as they hung preparatory to being photographed.

He took the lead and Villiers followed through the bent-grass that covered this bit of the island.

YOU know how even the most commonplace houses have personalities of their own—how one says of an old house, sometimes, "I would not live here; it feels like a place where a murder has been committed"? Just the same spirit hangs about places. To tread the ground of Skeleton Island was to tread the stage of romantic villainy; knowing nothing, even of its hinted history, one felt that in the voices of the gulls, the sound of the surf, the blaze of blue sea and the secretive mangroves there was something disquieting, a thrill

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whose last vestige hung to the scene like a nimbus.

Van Amberg, walking ahead, stopped. He had found what he sought.

In a clear space where no grass was, on the dead coral that formed the basis of the island, face downward and spread starfish-wise, lay the skeleton of a man.

"Well," said Van Amberg, in a voice of triumph, "what do you think?"

Villiers touched the right shin-bone with his foot; it was immovable; some growth had glued it down to the rock; it was easy to see, now, how it had lain there undisturbed through the years. The ribs had fallen away to dust; the vertebræ, the limb bones, and part of the skull remained; the bones of the hands were perfect except for the phalanges of the middle, ring and little fingers of the right hand. The phalanges of the index finger were perfect, and this gave the thing a horrible semblance, as though, embers of a man though it were, it had intention. It was pointing.

"Well, what do you think?"

"It's queer."

"I tell you, it's more than queer! Now I'm going to measure right away. May as well *see* if there's anything in that dream. I dreamt to buy Pennsylvanian stock once, and didn't, and it went up five points the next week. Let's see how this will figure. Hold the tape for me."

He went down on his knees beside the thing, and Villiers did the same. Scarcely had they begun to unroll the tape when a voice, more startling than the stroke of a drum in that lonely place, made them spring to their feet.

"Hullo!" said the voice.

CHAPTER VIII

BEN GUNN

TWENTY yards or so away, and almost in a line with the pointing finger, the figure of a girl was standing, ghostly and clad in white, beneath the shade of the mangroves. Bay-cedar bushes hid her from below the knees. Across the great splash of dividing light in the misty shadow of the trees, she seemed for one wild second an hallucination of the spot, a ghost from gone years. Then, in a moment, she became lovely and living—she had stepped into the sunlight.

Hatless, with hair of Titian gold, laughing, yet with a tremor as though half-terrified—as though she had stepped from the world of Romance by some accident and were breathing for the first time the vivid air of the living world, she came towards the men as they advanced to meet her.

"Oh, I am so glad!" She took Van Amberg's hand avidly; she turned and took Villiers's hand. "I have just waked up from sleep—I gave myself up for lost. I heard your voices and I was nearly afraid to look. I was among those bushes; I just peeped, and when I saw you I knew I was all right—say, where *is* this place, anyway?"

The ghost had an American accent, faint but perceptible.

"I guess you must excuse us," said Van Amberg, the first to find his tongue, "you've knocked us—I mean we didn't expect any one here—it's extraordinary——"

"We're awfully glad, though, to be of service," cut in Villiers.

"You're not gladder than I am," said the Lady of the Island; "think, if I had been all alone here to-night—have you a boat?"

"Yes, we have a boat," said Van Amberg, "but excuse me—where—how——"

"Come into the shade of the trees; I have lost my hat. I swam here—I was staying at the Tarpon Club."

"I know it," said the impetuous Van Amberg. "Why, it's twenty miles from here——"

"Yes, and I took a little motor-boat out this morning for a spin, and the coast led me on and on, and then it caught fire—the boat, you know."

Destructive to romantic imaginations as this statement was, they did not feel it, for it was spoken by Romance herself, alive, warm, ruddy of hair—entrancing.

"And you?"

"I went overboard and swam—I was close in here. I kicked off my shoes—lost them, too."

She showed a little foot in a bronze silk stocking. They had not noticed before that she was shoeless.

"Great Providence!" said Van Amberg. He went down on his right knee and whipped his left shoe off.

"Please, if you will let me—there may be tarantulas and things about."

She popped her little foot into the offered shoe promptly enough at the word "tarantulas." When she was shod, she shuffled

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about to try the fit and laughed, holding up her dress to show the effect. Beneath the blue-gray eyes there was a slight powdering of freckles, and when she laughed she screwed her eyes up after the fashion of Du Maurier's adorable Duchess. Villiers thought he had never seen a woman like this before.

"Then I dried myself in the sun," went on she, suddenly forgetting her shoes and remembering her story, "then I got into the shade, and then, I believe, I cried a bit and fell asleep, and then I awoke, and oh, how glad I was when I saw you! Have you anything with you to eat?"

"Lots," said Villiers.

"I'm hungrier than hungry——"

"You won't be long," said Van Amberg. "If you will sit down here on this old fallen tree we'll fetch the things—now, may I again—may I ask you—this old Panama?"

He took his hat off and Villiers swore at himself for not having thought of this.

"Will you wear it till we can find something better?"

"Thanks."

She tried it on and laughed.

"It feels all right."

"It looks beautiful."

"Quite," concurred Villiers.

THEN they started off for the boat, leaving her sitting in the borrowed hat and shoes, a picture that Fragonard would have worshiped—all but the feet.

"Talk of treasure!" said Van Amberg in a hurried voice as he bundled into the boat, "this beats it all! Mysterious—dash it, man! the thing was pointing at her—and my dream! Remember? I tell you it was Providence sent us here—clutch hold like a good fellow."

He handed out the bundle of provisions and followed with a stone water-bottle and the tent-canvas and pole. They carried the things to the clearing amidst the bay cedars where the fallen tree was.

"We can't pitch a tent here," said Van Amberg. "No matter, we don't want one; the trees are shady enough."

He went down on his knees and began to undo the bundle.

"Canned tongue, canned beef, canned oysters—wonder what he put those in for? Nabisco wafers—wafers, of all things in the world; pineapple—if we'd only *known*, we'd have brought better stuff than this."

"Couldn't be better," said the lady on the log, beginning upon the wafers while Villiers opened a can of tongue. "Have you any cheese? I'm like the man on Treasure Island who had the craving for cheese, what was his name?—oh, yes, Ben Gunn."

Van Amberg who was engaged in haggling open a tin of peaches with a pocket knife, kneeling at his work, fell back on his heels. Villiers, who had managed to extract the tongue in pieces upon a tin plate, stood rigid.

"Treasure Island," said Van Amberg, "what made you think of that?"

"Nothing. I mean everything. The fact that I was on a desolate island like Ben Gunn—oh, what makes one think of things—they come into one's head."

"Do you believe in telepathy?" asked Villiers while Van Amberg went on with his duties with lips pursed up.

"No—do you?"

"Upon my word, I don't know, but what you say is such a strange coincidence——"

He stopped, Van Amberg had glanced up with an expression that said as plainly as written words, "Don't go telling her that childish nonsense."

"How is it a coincidence?" asked the female relative of Ben Gunn, leisurely making a sandwich of tongue between two wafers.

"We came here as a joke," blurted out Van Amberg. "We pretended this place was like Treasure Island." Then, furious at the boyish sound of what he was saying and true to his impetuous nature he, not being able to get out, pulled the whole house of ridicule down on his head. "We were playing a game of treasure-finding; we brought picks and shovels; we called our boat the *Hispaniola*; he's Dr. Livesey and I'm Jim Hawkins—don't we look it?"

"And I'm Ben Gunn!" said the girl. "What a lark! Tell me where you both came from and I'll tell you why I want to know."

"We come from the Sea-Bat Club," said Villiers.

"The Sea-Bat Club! Why I told the Tarpon people I'd try to make it this morning; I said it for a joke. They said it was thirty miles down the coast."

"Forty," said Van Amberg.

"My name is Grant. My father is

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Colonel Grant of St. Paul. I'm staying with aunt at the Tarpon—they have ladies' quarters at the Tarpon—and papa was to come to-morrow; the elections have delayed him."

"My name is Van Amberg."

"And mine is Villiers, and now that we are all introduced, will you please tell us?"

"What?" asked Miss Grant.

"What you promised—the reason you want to know where we came from."

"Oh, I'll tell you—I wanted to know where you came from because you are the most original people I've met. It's just delightful playing at Treasure Island at your age, it makes me feel young again. *What* made you think of it?"

"I'd found an old skeleton here last year," said Van Amberg, "and—we came to play with it."

"The little things——"

"There you are," said the Town Lot Speculator, suddenly becoming huffy, and speaking with the freedom of long acquaintance. "I knew you'd guy us."

"I'm not—I'm ready to play the game myself, only we haven't time. Where is your skeleton, or is it only pretense, too?"

"No, the old skeleton is all right; it's over there."

MISS GRANT looked apprehensively in the direction he was pointing. "*Here!* Do you really mean I was alone here with a skeleton?"

"Only for it," said Van Amberg, "you would be alone now."

"He dreamed——" said Villiers, then he stopped, for the Town Lot Speculator had shot a glance at him that said loudly as trumpets, "Oh, *don't* give me away with that old foolish yarn!"

"Yes?" said Miss Grant.

"*Oh*, my!" said Van Amberg. Then, like a rabid dog turning on itself, "Yes, I had a dream. Had too much plum-duff for dinner, I guess; dreamt I was here and Captain Flint's parrot was in one of those trees shouting directions to me where to dig for the treasure——"

"Yes?"

"Oh, that's all. He was shouting 'Twenty yards from the finger-tip, pieces of eight'—I guess I'd got 'The Gold Bug' and 'Treasure Island' mixed up in my head—that's all."

"How do you know that the dream is not true?" said Miss Grant.

No one spoke for a moment and the crying of the terns from the key to landward filled the air. They seemed taking up the question:

"How do you know it's not true? Hi! Hi—How do you know it's not true?" cried the terns.

"Oh, dreams are foolishness," said Van Amberg.

"Not a bit!" said Villiers. "But for your dream we would not have had the pleasure of rescuing Miss—er—Grant."

"Ben Gunn would still have been wandering about in desolation," put in the lady, "and *oh*, if he had happened on that skeleton! It would have meant another swim, that's all. No, I don't think dreams are foolishness—have we time to hunt for the pieces of eight? Even if we started now, we won't get to the Tarpon Club before long after dark, so an hour doesn't matter, anyway."

"If you'd *care* to," said Van Amberg, getting up on hands and knees.

"Of course I'd care to! Does one get such a chance every day? Twenty yards away from the thing didn't the parrot say? Let's go and look."

"You are not afraid?"

"I am. But I'm going to look."

Van Amberg led the way and Villiers and the girl followed. She made so pretty a picture in the Panama that he longed to look at her fully, to gaze at her and drink her in with his eyes, to feed on her beauty; almost at first sight she had made his whole being leap alive. He had made little show in conversation; he fancied that she must think him a fool or at least stupid. Burning with a terrible bashfulness, he did not know that she saw it with the keen perception—the terrible perception which makes woman a magician where man is concerned.

"Here he is," said Van Amberg.

When Miss Grant caught sight of the desolate thing she gave a little cry and clutched Villiers's arm, almost paralyzing his heart.

"He won't hurt you," said the Town Lot Speculator, who saw the action. "He's glued down."

"Poor thing! And to think that was once a man!" she released Villiers' arm and stood with hands folded.

Villiers, taking a step away, glanced at her standing thus, lovely in the sunlight, graceful, the very embodiment of youth, beauty and the joy of Spring.

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And before her the once-man sprawled like a star-fish on a slab, pointing and with face hidden.

She gave a little shiver.

"It is almost as if he were laughing."

"Laughing!"

"Can you imagine a person throwing himself face downward, overcome with laughter and pointing in derision?"

JUST as one can see shapes in the embers of a fire, one might, straining one's imagination, have seen laughter in the form upon the rock, laughter than which nothing could be more disturbing to the imagination. One might fancy these remnants of a man had cast themselves down in a wild paroxysm of mirth. Mirth at themselves, the world they lay on and the empty sky above.

"I guess if he is," said Van Amberg, "he's long forgotten the joke. Well, let's start, and, that reminds me, I've forgotten the measuring tape."

"Why, I saw you taking it out of the boat," said Villiers.

"I know, but I chucked it back; it was too big to go into my pocket."

He led the way to where the boat was moored, Ben Gunn shuffling along in the shoes four sizes too large for her, Villiers walking beside her and offering the support of his arm at difficult places, and Van Amberg whistling and not once looking back.

He had seen her clutch Villiers' arm. He had no right of property at all in Ben Gunn, yet, leaving aside the fascination she exercised upon him, his mind had seized upon her and claimed her attention as a thing of his own, just as it had claimed the *corpus vile* of the sea-bat.

"Acquisitive," that is the word—grasping at what he wished for, clinging to it when grasped, tenacious of clutch if opposed, yet wildly open-hearted and generous in friendship, the queer character of Van Amberg was showing itself now at its worst.

His back view as he walked expressed assumed and insolent indifference; it said to Ben Gunn as plainly as words, "Clutch his arm! *I* don't care—not a cent!"

He reached the lagoon bank, stood rigid for a moment and then turned to the others with a shout.

"She's gone!"

The *Hispaniola* had slipped her moorings to the fretting of the turning tide which was now flooding through the lagoon.

CHAPTER IX

"YO, HO, HO!"

AS THE three stood for a moment speechless, staring at the empty lagoon, a gray shadow flitted by through the water. It was a shark.

"She mayn't have cleared the lagoon," said Van Amberg, "there's only one way to see." He stripped off his coat.

"Stop!" cried Villiers. "The water is full of sharks!"

"Bother sharks!" The words were followed by the splash, and next moment he was breasting the lagoon water, swimming hard against the current in a diagonal line towards the key.

Villiers and the girl, horrified and fascinated by the courage of the Adventurous One, watched him as he reached the middle of the lagoon, turned, glanced to seaward, and then came swimming back.

Wild enthusiasm filled Miss Grant and she clapped her little hands as he dragged himself ashore and shook himself like a swimming dog.

"She's gone, clean."

Villiers, enthusiastic as the girl, seized his hand.

"You're the bravest man I ever met!"

"I wouldn't have done it for the whole wide world!" chimed in Ben Gunn. "Oh, you *are* brave! But you're dripping. Couldn't we light a fire?"

"I'll dry in the sun," said the Fearless One. "It's nothing—it had to be done, and I did it. Come on till I get on the sand of the beach; that will dry me."

They crossed over through the grass to the beach baking in the four o'clock sun, and there Van Amberg laid himself down to dry, and they sat about him, worshiping him.

"Oh," said the girl, a sudden recollection seizing her, "if I had known there were sharks about this morning when I was swimming!"

"They wouldn't have hurt you," said Van Amberg. "I mean, it's probable that the launch being ablaze frightened them off. Oh, it's nothing. If a man has to do a thing, let him do it. What troubles me is the boat. If I'd seen her, I'd have swum for her, sharks or no sharks."

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"Well," said Villiers, "you have more courage than I have."

"Not a bit! See here: the question now is, what are we to do? Don't you think the Tarpon people will send a search party for you if you don't come back?"

"The bother is," said Ben Gunn, "they may think I've stopped at the Sea-Bat Club. Auntie knows——"

"Yes?"

"Well, she knows, don't you know, that I'm pretty adventurous. Do ladies ever stay at the Sea-Bat?"

"Oh, yes," said Van Amberg. "Hoffrath brought his wife last year."

"Of course, they *may* send a search party. We've got food enough till some one comes, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes—dead loads for a day or two, and water enough if we put ourselves on an allowance."

"Well, then, there's no use in fretting. Let's make the best of things. *I* think it's jolly; and we have a tent."

"Yes; we'll put that up for you over there by the trees. We'll give you that half of the island for yourself, and Villiers and I will camp out this end and make a fire. There's only one thing that gives me the shivers, and that's mosquitoes; but I don't think we'll get them here, we're too far out on the reef. What we've got to do now is to get sticks for the fire, get the tent up, count over the provisions, and arrange about the water allowance."

"This is almost as good as the real thing," said Ben Gunn, with a sudden expansion of soul. "Oh, it's just like a book! Listen! Couldn't you fancy——!"

Before them the emerald, curving waves were breaking on the sands; the blue sea, voiceless and sailless, stretched to the horizon; the voices of the terns from the key behind the island came spirit-like and lonely, mixing with the lonely sound of the surf on the far-flung reef.

It was all like a wonderfully colored page torn from some brilliant romance of the sea.

Van Amberg was right. Men at that moment were pursuing wealth in New York and Chicago, tearing across the continent at express speed after gold. These visionaries, pursuing a dream of fortune which they knew to be absurd, were extracting pleasure from their dream—the others only hardness, weariness and profit.

"HOW do you know it's not true? How do you know it's not true? Hi! Hi! How do you know?" The terns were still calling their challenge to the imagination; almost at the same moment the three adventurers forgot sharks and tents and provisions in the recollection of their conversation at luncheon.

"I was thinking of your dream," said Villiers, breaking a momentary silence.

"So was I," said Ben Gunn.

"So was I," said Van Amberg. "There you are again! This blessed place is nothing but a nest of coincidences."

"How would it be to have a try before we start on the tent?"

"I'm too blessed tired to do both."

"I'll dig."

Van Amberg's feathers instantly began to ruffle.

"I guess it was *my* dream," he said, "and I ought to have first hand in the foolishness. I'd counted on doing the digging. I wouldn't have come here if I thought I wasn't to have first hand with the pick and shovel!"

"My dear sir, do, for goodness' sake!" said Villiers. "I wouldn't deprive you of it for the world."

"Now you're getting riled," said Van Amberg, "and you're right. I guess I'm full up with selfishness. You shall have first go."

"I won't indeed; it's yours by right."

"Snakes! what did I do? Dream a stupid old dream! You *will!*"

"I won't! That ends it."

"Now you'll begin to quarrel the other end about," said Ben Gunn. "It's very well, I think, you found me on this island. I'll arbitrate. We won't start to look for the treasure till to-morrow morning, and then you'll draw lots which to dig first."

The confusion of the arbitrator's English did not obscure the proposition, which was accepted.

"And now," said Van Amberg, "suppose we collect those sticks and see about the tent and things."

The work took them till sundown. Van Amberg had a little case containing a comb and a tiny mirror. He presented them to the girl, who retired to the tent to make her toilet, while the treasure-seekers lit their fire at the other end of the island on the fringe of the beach.

After supper, with the great moon climbing the sky before them, they sat talking; the men smoking and the girl breaking bits

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from a little stick and casting them on the glowing embers of the fire. The terns had ceased calling, and the only sound to be heard was the tune of the surf, a league-long whisper, lulling but for an indefinable ghostliness in its voice.

On a night like this, with the moonlight on the mangroves and the foam of the washing tide, the name, Skeleton Island, became suggestive, and the "grue" came not from the mangrove shadows but from the dark lagoon on the landward side. The beach was bright and tuneful with surf and moonlight and fire-glow; all the more desolate and dark and fetching to the imagination was the silent lagoon. Ben Gunn, who knew nothing of the island's history, felt nothing of this ghostly haunting.

"If they have started to search for me," said she, "this fire would lead them to us."

"More likely drive them away," said Villiers, remembering Pedro's words about the "hants."

"Why?"

"They'd think, perhaps, it was a lighthouse," said Van Amberg, nudging the other, who sat beside him, as if to say, "There you go! Frightening her to death."

"I don't see why a lighthouse should drive them away. Isn't the moon beautiful on the water! Let's sing."

"Good!" said Van Amberg. "Let's sing. I haven't any voice, but I'll do my best. You start."

"What shall I sing? Something out of 'Floradora'? Goodness, no! It would make one feel as if one were in a theater. I don't know any song that wouldn't spoil this place, except maybe the song out of 'Treasure Island.' Let's pretend we're tipsy sailors, and sing it."

"I don't know the tune," said Van Amberg hurriedly. He did not particularly want that song waking the echoes just then.

"It's got no tune—any tune. What's this it was?—

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,
Ho, ho, ho!"

"*Yo, ho, ho,*" corrected Villiers.

"That's it. *Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum!*
Drink and the [You must put that in] *had done for the rest!*
Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum!

"Now let's sing it together."

They did, and silence and the tune of the surf closed down on the last words.

"How would you feel," said Villiers, leaning on his arm and casting a bit of stick at the fire, "if you suddenly heard a voice—a thin voice beyond those trees, crying, 'Darby McGraw—Darby McGraw—Darby McGraw!'?"

"I guess I'd feel the sea round me," said Ben Gunn. "I guess I wouldn't stop to think of sharks."

"Oh, don't be suggesting such nonsense," said the Town Lot Speculator, with an edge in his voice. "I'm going to have a drop of whisky to keep off the night air, and then I propose we turn in. We ought to be up bright and early to dig for that stuff."

He fetched the whisky-bottle, which he had laid with the supper things near the fire, a stone jar of water, and some pannikins.

"There! I knew I'd forgot something. We've no corkscrew. Never mind." He knocked the top off the bottle deftly, filled half a pannikin each for himself and Villiers (Ben Gunn was a teetotaler), and put water in.

"Here's to you," said he, raising the pannikin to his lips. "Great Scott!—it's RUM!"

"By Jove! so it is!" said Villiers. "That club steward man must have given it to us in mistake."

Van Amberg did not reply for an instant; he was engaged in fortifying himself with the spirit.

"I guess I'll be coincidenced to death before I leave this island," said he.

CHAPTER X

THE GHOSTLY SHIP

TEN minutes later, sitting by the fire alone with Villiers, he took the club steward into the grasp of his rhetoric and coldly and methodically cursed him from crown to heel.

"Oh, bother the steward!" said Villiers. "What I'm thinking is that those provisions won't last much longer, and if no one comes we'll have nothing to eat—unless we eat Ben Gunn."

"I shouldn't mind," said the American with fervor. "I've never seen any one to match her—Oh, my!" It was as though a sudden and painful thought had struck him.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing. I'm going to try and get some sleep if those blessed coinci-

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dences will stop bothering. They're worse than Havana mosquitoes."

He stretched himself on the sand, with his feet to the fire which they had made up. Villiers did the same. A moment of silence passed, then Van Amberg said:

"You remember that charter we signed?"

"Yes."

"Another blessed coincidence."

"How so?"

"I didn't stick in 'treasure;' I put 'anything of value we might find.'"

Villiers knew he was referring to Ben Gunn, but he was discreet.

"Well?"

"Nothing—only, it's funny. Do you think she'll be all right in that tent?"

"Who?"

"Ben Gunn."

"You seem thinking a lot about her."

"It doesn't matter a whoop in —— what I seem to be doing," began Van Amberg. Then, falling from fever-heat to chill—"Oh, my!"

"What on earth is the matter with you?"

"I guess I've got the 'oh my's' pretty bad. You're such a good chap I can't quarrel with you—I've got something on my mind, that's all. Say!"

"Yes?"

"If a man was really a skunk, do you think he'd have the courage to say he was a skunk?"

"No; that sort of bounder never owns up."

"Then I'm a skunk."

"How?"

"No matter."

Silence for a moment, while the great moon, lolling above the trees, flooded the island with light.

"Say," said Van Amberg.

"What?"

"This expedition has taken us where Pedro said the sea-bats take people—you remember he said the sea-bats know where a fellow doesn't want to go, and go there. I've started to hunt for treasure, and now I've got myself in *this* mess."

"Which mess?"

"She," said Van Amberg.

"Who?"

"Ben Gunn."

"You've gone dotty on her?"

"Yep."

"Well, so've I; so shut your head and go to sleep. Besides, you're not in a mess; you've as good a right to go dotty on her as I have—more chance with her, too, considering you've made yourself a blessed hero with those sharks."

"Oh, Great *Scott!* Don't talk of them! That's the worst part of the business."

Villiers began to imagine that the rum was disturbing the mentality of his companion.

"How?"

"Never mind."

Nothing more was said, and presently sleep and peace fell upon the island, and the two human beings by the embers of the fire slept as only youth can sleep, forgetful of Treasure, Love and even Life.

THE moon sank slowly through the sky, the tide turned with a sound as if the great ocean were turning in her dreams. This was the island's most fateful and mysterious hour; when the lagoon was darkest with the shadow of the mangroves; when the Sprawling One took life, if ever he took life, and a mist born of the night dimmed tree and reef and island, casting a vague veil of copper tinge across the moon.

Van Amberg, sleeping peacefully beside his companion, stirred suddenly in his sleep and sat up.

He stared around at the mist-dimmed trees and the gently flooding sea, then he listened; he listened as he had never listened before—as he never would listen, probably, again. Then he sprang on all fours and shook Villiers.

Villiers, awakened suddenly from his sleep, found the white face of Van Amberg within a foot of him.

"Hi!—what—what's the matter?"

"Hush! They're here."

"Here! Who?"

"*Who!* Listen! They're warping a ship into the lagoon!"

Villiers sprang to his feet, as did the other.

Splash!

Beyond the mangroves from the lagoon it came, the sound of a hawser hitting the water.

"Come on and see," said Villiers. "Some scamps may be going to land, and we have to look after *her*."

"Not for a million! It's no one living, no one to hurt. It's one of the old pirate ships; I tell you I heard them! Heard them shouting to put the helm to larboard. *Listen!!!*"

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Splash!

"I'll go and see," said Villiers.

He started at a run to the lagoon side and, by the trees, peeped and listened.

In these last moments of the night, in the last level rays of the moon, the mangroves cast their shade far over the water. The lagoon was simply a shadow; a shadow filled with possibilities. Then, as Villiers looked and listened, a sight met his eyes that punished him for his temerity.

A gauze-gray boat was coming up the lagoon stealthily and without sound of oar; the vessel was being towed, not warped. He clung to a tree, watching, waiting for the horror of the following vision.

Splash! A ghostly gun-flash showed away on the lagoon water behind the boat, and in a second he knew all.

He came running back to where Van Amberg was sitting on the sands, with his head between his hands.

"It's nothing. They've been fooling us."

"Who?"

"The fish. I thought I saw a boat coming up the lagoon; it was the phosphorescence of a shark, a twenty-footer, and I saw the splash of a big fish jumping."

He was not cruel enough to say more, for Van Amberg's teeth were still chattering; but he could not help wondering that a man with such a highly-strung temperament and imagination should have shown the nerve Van Amberg had shown the day before.

He remembered what Van Amberg had said about being a skunk. There was a mystery in all this which was beyond his mind to unravel.

He got the rum-bottle and they both had a drink, and then they sat silent for a moment, absorbing the sight before them—the struggle between the passing moonlight and the coming dawn.

"Do you think she's slept all right?" suddenly asked Van Amberg.

"B. G.?"

"Yep."

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder. She knows nothing of all that rubbish Pedro told us."

"Here's the sun. I guess I cut a pretty poor figure last night."

"Not a bit."

"I must have dreamt I heard those pirate guys shouting; then the splash of the fish did me. No matter. I own up to being frightened, and that's moral courage, isn't it?"

"You're an awfully imaginative and high-strung chap," said Villiers. "That's all that's the matter. Besides, you've got lots of pluck when it comes to the pinch."

The great warm hand of the sun was now upon the beach, the sea had flashed to sapphire and the foam to rose-gold; a frigate-bird passed overhead, with wings domed out, and the voices of the terns came in gusty clamorings from the key.

"Listen to them," said Van Amberg. "One could swear they were mocking us. I came here to make mockery of the old island, and I guess she's turning the tables on me. I'm half afraid to go digging for that stuff."

"Why?"

"For fear I'd strike another coincidence."

"Hullo!" cried a voice from away beneath the mangrove trees.

Van Amberg sprang to his feet. It was Ben Gunn. She had stepped into the sunlight, with the breeze blowing her skirts and tilting the broad leaf of her Panama.

CHAPTER XI

DIGGING FOR TREASURE

THEY breakfasted on canned provisions and a joke.

The provisions supplied the joke. The club steward, half asleep and in a temper, had victualed the expedition with a fine disregard of the first principles of dietetics. There was only one small packet of biscuits and another of wafers to balance the nitrogenous food-stuffs; there was neither sugar nor salt; they had a tea-kettle but no tea.

Van Amberg had lit the fire; they did not want a fire, but it added to the picture, the dry bay-cedar sticks and withered mangrove branches bickering in the sun blaze and the blue-gray smoke coiling against the morning blue; besides, it added to the company; a fire is almost a person—quite a companion.

Van Amberg was cheerful and gloomy by fits and starts, and, to Villiers, a slow thinker but a level-headed one, Van Amberg's conduct and conversation presented a problem impossible as yet of solution. How could it be that he was so fearless of danger in the most horrible form, yet so fearful of ghosts; what did he mean by calling himself names the night before; why these fits of gloom that fell on him at times; and in what manner had he got himself in a

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mess by falling under the fascination of Ben Gunn?

She noticed his manner, too. She was still wearing the Panama, and her little feet were still encased in the shoes so many times too large for them. Villiers would have given a year of his life to have been alone with her even for an hour; alone with her he felt the possibility of shining, dimly enough, perhaps, yet with all the brilliancy that was in him. Van Amberg demagnetized him, wet-blanketed him, made him tongue-tied and at times a bit gloomy.

Ben Gunn noticed this, too; came to the logical conclusion that the strange manner of Jim Hawkins and the gloom and awkwardness of Dr. Livesey were due to one cause only—herself, and enjoyed the situation.

"No more tongue, thank you; I have finished. Oh, what a blue, blue sea! You have yawned again—want your Panama?"

"I guess I've got the 'Darby M'Graws,'" said Van Amberg, rousing himself from a fit of depression, "it's the air of this Island—listen to those gulls!"

From the key the crying of the terns and frigate-birds came on the warm wind; away out at sea a great gull was flying, spirit-white against the blue morning sky; the sound of the surf on the reef came like a lullaby.

"There is no good thing but sleep," said the sound of the surf; "there is no good thing but sleep—sleep—sleep. What is better than sleep?"

"Oh, the desolation," cried the gulls, "the desolation, the desolation! What is better than desolation, broken ships and the bones of men?"

"Love," spoke the passion-flower-blue sea, heaving to the gentle swell, the league-long lapses of swell flooding from Matanzas, the Bahamas and the ocean beyond.

There was a touch of equatorial splendor in the morning, a spice of tropic musk in the lukewarm wind; the faint, faint fragrance of palm and bay-cedar and mangrove were always here; but this morning there was an added something, an indefinable something, a breath from the torrid Summer just breaking upon the Florida coast. In a month from now Skeleton Island would be insupportable—a vapor bath in a blaze of light, but this morning it was perfect, drowsy and blue-ringed, sung to by the sea, overshot by the romantical calling of the gulls.

BEN GUNN for a moment forgot the existence of her companions; hers was a sincere and simple soul easily fetched by distance and the blue to happy wanderings. She was brought back to reality by the voice of Van Amberg. He was engaged in washing the plates with sea water which Villiers had fetched in the kettle.

"Say, did you hear anything in the night?"

"I?" asked Ben Gunn. "Lots of things. I heard fish jumping in the lagoon."

"You knew they were fish!"

"I knew it couldn't be anything else; you see, I've heard salmon jumping, and it was exactly the same sound, only bigger. Then I heard a rustle outside my tent and I looked out, and what do you think I saw?"

"Can't."

"A crab as white as snow standing on legs like stilts in the moonlight, and staring at me with eyes like rubies."

Van Amberg looked up from his plate-washing.

"It was a spirit crab, I know the beggars."

"And what did you do?" asked Villiers.

"I said '*Coosh!*'"

"Yes."

"It 'cooshed,' and I was just closing my eyes when I heard another fish jumping, and then your voices."

"I guess you heard me," said Van Amberg. Then bitterly and viciously. "Do you know what happened last night?"

"No—what?"

"I heard old ghosts of pirate ships being warped up the lagoon."

"You did—oh, *why* didn't you call me to listen?"

"You heard them, too; it was only fish jumping, and my own stupid fancy. Villiers, here, heard it, and he had the pluck to go and look, while I sat on the sands here like a cry-baby with my fingers jammed in my ears."

"You need not be ashamed of that," said Ben Gunn.

"Not a bit," said Villiers, who saw that his extraordinary companion was working himself up into another fit of self-revilement; "a man so plucky in the face of sharks——"

"Don't!" cried Van Amberg, "I tell you those sharks and all that was bunkum. There was no courage to it—sharks——"

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He got on his feet and walked away from his companions like a man insulted. He walked to where the skeleton lay amidst the grasses and stood with his hands in his pockets, staring at it gloomily.

"What on earth is the matter with him?" asked the girl.

"I don't know; I can't make him out. He's the best of good fellows and as plucky as can be; but ever since we landed on this island he seems to have had something on his mind. At least, ever since we met you——"

Villiers blushed furiously and wished that the sand would cover him from the eyes of Ben Gunn; he felt that the words he had spoken and the hateful burning of his cheeks had betrayed the secret of his feelings, and the feelings of Van Amberg. He played with the sand, making it into little mounds; then he looked up and met her gaze, which was fixed on him.

She was half smiling; for a moment, for one burning and thrilling moment, she looked calmly and serenely down into his eyes, down into his soul, as a naiad might look into the waters of a pond. Ah! that moment, that gaze, which said, as yet, nothing, and yet in some mysterious way hinted at everything!

THE spell was broken by Van Amberg's voice calling to ask them whether they had forgotten about the treasure business.

Ben Gunn rose to her feet; Villiers rose also, and they came towards Van Amberg.

"Are you still keen on it?" asked the Town Lot Speculator who had recovered somewhat from his ill-humor.

"Keen! I should think so; why, it's what we are here for; at least you two."

"Oh, it's all foolishness," said Van Amberg; "still, it will pass the time. We've lost the measuring tape, but I reckon I can step off twenty yards, *ought* to be able, considering all the blocks I have measured; the only thing is keeping in a straight line."

"That will be easy enough," said Villiers; "at least, if you go out of line we can direct you from here."

"Right," said the American.

Ben Gunn's heart quite fluttered. Even as a child she had always fed her mind on boys' books in preference to girls', she had played Buccaneers with small brothers, and now, playing Treasure Island with two strangers, the old charm of Belief came to her like a breeze from the past.

As she stood with skirts fluttering in the sea wind, Van Amberg took his place with his right heel against the point of the indicating finger.

He glanced behind him trying to get the direction in which it was pointing and failed.

"Go right ahead," said the girl, "walk slowly and I'll call out if you go much out of the line; now then, one, two, three, off you go!"

Van Amberg began stepping off the yards.

"A little more to the left; that's right; now straight ahead; more to the right; *'nough*—now straight ahead."

"Twenty," cried Van Amberg, wheeling round and standing stock-still amidst the bay-cedar bushes.

She knelt down beside the skeleton, of which she had lost all fear, and glanced along the phalanx of the pointing finger.

"More to the right—stop, that's enough;" then to Villiers, "kneel down and see."

He knelt beside her, the vertebræ of the once man between them. His shoulder touched hers. He glanced carefully along the pointer.

"Excuse me, but I think you have put him too far to the right."

"Let me see."

As she leaned to look, her hair brushed his face. She had taken the Panama off, and the hot, sweet, gorse-like perfume of her hair made him dizzy for a moment.

"I'm sure he's exactly right."

"Let's make absolutely sure," said Villiers. He brought his head so close to hers that they touched.

Van Amberg watching his dubious directors from a distance showed signs of impatience.

"Well, a foot or two doesn't matter anyway," said Ben Gunn, withdrawing her head from its dangerous position and rising to her feet. "Now come on and get the picks and things and let's dig."

Villiers took up the pick and shovel and followed her amidst the bushes.

"Look here," said Van Amberg, in whom excitement seemed struggling with irritation. "Look here, this is the spot, if you haven't directed me wrong—well, look, there's not a bush growing on it! How's that for an indication?"

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Surely enough, he was standing in a little clear space amidst the bushes; the fact that there were other spaces exactly similar here and there amidst the bay-cedars did not count at all with the treasure-seekers.

VAN AMBERG took off his coat, flung it on the bushes; rolled up his shirt sleeves, seized the pick, swung it in the air, and drove it into the ground with a whoop that echoed amidst the trees; the indications had become for his imaginative mind a "sure enough" sign, and his enthusiasm infected the others.

In a moment he had forgotten Town Lots, Speculation, New York, Ben Gunn—everything but the wild business in hand. Again and again he brought the pick down, breaking the surface earth; then, flinging the pick aside, he seized the shovel and sent the earth flying over the bushes in spadefuls.

He curled his lips as he labored, the sweat ran down his face, his breath came hard; exclamations broke from him addressed apparently to the skeleton, the old pirates, the earth he was shoveling, Fortune, and the treasure she was guarding.

"Another shovelful on your coffin, old chap—skidoo—*up* you come—bashful or not—show your face, Mary!"

Villiers, who had never before seen a Yankee digging for buried treasure, stood astonished, excited with the excitement of the treasure-delver, and half fearful that he might burst a blood-vessel.

Ben Gunn, filled with the fever of the business, could scarcely restrain herself.

Roots spreading from the nearer bushes he cut through with vicious blows of the spade-edge, and now the tree-earth had given place to sand.

All of a sudden the spade-edge struck something hard and woody and seemingly hollow sounding.

Van Amberg, half dead with his exertions, half breathless but wholly triumphant, turned to his companions.

"Ile!" cried he, "We've struck it at last, pure colza!"

CHAPTER XII

THE TREASURE

FOR a moment he stood hand on spade, the image of exhausted Victory; then, suddenly, he collapsed. His spirit, far greater than his body, had upheld him during the last few moments of digging, but it could do no more.

He lay resting on the edge of the treasure-hole, exhausted but happy, while Villiers sprinkled him with water from one of the jars and Ben Gunn fanned him with the Panama.

"I just knew it was there," said he. "I heard it shouting to me. It's a box—oh, my! didn't you hear the pick on the lid? I'll have it out in a moment! Oh, I'm blame selfish—I guess you two are aching to be at it; well, go ahead and fetch it out. Don't mind me!"

"Never!" cried Villiers and the girl both together. Then the girl, "It's yours, you dreamt of it, you've done the digging." Then, turning to Villiers, "What do you say?"

"The same as you. I won't put hand to pick or shovel."

Van Amberg half raised himself on his elbow. "I guess a tot of rum would help me to finish the business," said he. "Let's have a sip all round for luck; it's the thing to do."

Villiers fetched the rum and a pannikin, and poured out the spirit. Ben Gunn took the first sip, then Van Amberg, raising himself on his elbow, half drained it.

The effect was magical, in a moment, bright of eye and with a flush on his sallow cheeks, he was at work again.

He was using the shovel now, clearing out the sand so as to get the lid of the treasure-chest in view. He struck again at the spot where the pick-point had met the wood, and again came the delightful and heartening sound; then he struck the spade in to the right of it and met with nothing but sand.

He had located the edge of the chest, and he marked out with his eye the exact spot that the lid would occupy. He could see it in his mind's eye, brass-bound and delightful.

"We'll have her out in a moment, now," said he. "I've only to shovel the stuff away from the lid. It's hidden tight and deep, but I'm Old Man Tough of Toughville. Whoop, skidoo, fade away!"

Out flew a spadeful of sand, another and another. Deeper and deeper he went, and still nothing but sand. He struck the spade down edgeways—sand and nothing but sand!

Then he stopped, looked around him.

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and fixed his eyes on a mangrove growing near by. Then, leaving the spot where he was digging, he attacked the point where the pick had first met resistance; having delved for a moment, he eagerly inserted his hand.

"Oh, heavens!" said Van Amberg. The girl could have laughed at the expression on his face, only she was far too excited.

"What is it?"

"A mangrove root!" said he, rising and dusting the sand from his clothes. A mangrove root, humping itself along through the sand, had given the woody and resonant answer to the blow of the pick.

The expression on Van Amberg's face—the whole business—seemed so funny to Ben Gunn that, forgetting her disappointment, she began to laugh. Her laughter touched off Villiers, and Van Amberg after a moment of ferocious sullenness joined in. He clambered out of the treasure-pit and wiped his forehead with his sleeve.

"Well," said Villiers, "we've had the fun of digging for it, anyhow."

"Listen to those blame gulls!" said Van Amberg, trying to laugh at his own very keen disappointment; "one would think they knew."

From the key the voices of the terns came mockingly on the warm wind:

"How do you know it isn't true? How do you know it isn't true? Ha, ha! How do you know?" queried the terns.

Ben Gunn, as they turned to leave the spot, cast a regretful glance into the treasure-hole. As she did so the pupils of her eyes spread wide, she caught her breath in with a little gasp and seized Van Amberg's arm so tightly that she hurt him.

"Look!" she cried.

He looked, and there on the sand at the bottom of the pit, ruddy, sparkling, delightful to the eye, lay an oval disc of gold!

CHAPTER XIII

SADIE

VAN AMBERG'S hand flew to his waistcoat pocket as though to see whether he had lost anything; he was about to spring down and seize the precious object, but the girl forestalled him.

In a moment she had it in her hand and was turning it over.

"Why, it's a portrait!" cried Villiers.

It was an oval miniature set in a gold-backed mount. It represented a girl with a pleasant but very decided-looking face. On the back of the thing was inscribed the mystical word, "Sadie."

"It's mine," said Van Amberg. "It must have dropped from my pocket."

"Sadie," read the girl. "Oh, dear, what a disappointment! I thought it was the first of the treasure." She handed it to him. "Who is it?"

"My sister," said Van Amberg.

He put the thing in his pocket without showing it to Villiers, and they turned away and made back through the bushes toward the beach.

"I guess that old skeleton was a humorist in his day," said Van Amberg as they left the bushes behind them.

Then he stood for a moment in silence, shading his eyes with his hand and looking over the sea.

Away to the southward the blue line of the horizon was broken by a star—the topsails of a ship hopelessly far away; the whole breeze-swept sea shewed no other sign of life but this. The girl, also shading her eyes, looked, sweeping the great blue silences and feeling in her heart for the first time the grue of loneliness. The strangeness of the situation at first, and then the excitement of the fruitless treasure-hunt had kept her spirits up till now.

She turned to Van Amberg.

"What will we do if no one comes to take us off?"

"I guess we'll have to swim to the key—cross it, and swim ashore and find our way along the coast."

"But the sharks?"

"Oh, *they* won't hurt."

His manner had become suddenly testy almost to rudeness. She looked at him in astonishment, then she turned to the shade of a mangrove and sat down in it. Villiers followed her and took his seat at her side. Van Amberg remained standing alone.

"Excuse me," said Ben Gunn, "but is your companion quite—what shall I say?"

"Oh, he's all right," said Villiers, "but I can't quite make him out—the very word 'sharks' seems to make him lose his temper—why, I don't know; and he seems to have something on his mind, but what it is I can't guess."

"He has been here before?"

"Yes."

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"I hope——"

"Yes?"

Ben Gunn laughed as if to reassure herself. "Oh, it's stupid of me—I was only going to say I hoped there was no mystery that we don't know of—that skeleton—Have you known Mr. Van Amberg long?"

"No, only a few days. But he told me all about himself. He came here for a nervous breakdown."

"Suppose," said Ben Gunn, "that he were suddenly to—break down again——"

"You need not have a bit of fear; his head is all right. Besides, I am here."

He placed his hand on the little hand that was resting on the ground beside him; it did not resent the action, but after a moment it modestly withdrew itself.

THEY were silent for a moment, then Ben Gunn heaved a sigh. "All the same, I wish some one would come and take us off."

She was watching Van Amberg as she spoke. The Town Lot Speculator was walking slowly away from them with his head bent and his hands in his pockets. They watched him pass along the burning strip of beach. Then, finding the sun too hot, he sought the shelter of the trees and disappeared.

"*Now* where has he gone to?" asked the girl.

"I don't know," said Villiers, too delighted at having her alone with him to bother about Van Amberg. "You need not have the least fear, he's too level-headed to do mischief; besides, I could put him in my pocket. Tell me, have you ever been in England?"

"Oh, yes," said Ben Gunn in a far-away voice, "last Fall. Say, don't you think his manner was funny at breakfast?"

Villiers inwardly cursed the Town Lot Speculator who, even in absence, managed to make himself *de trop*.

"He'd be talking quite brightly one moment," she went on, "and he'd be as glum as glum the next; then, his dreaming about that treasure and coming here to hunt for it—that's not exactly what ordinary people do."

"Well, as for that," said Villiers, "we were just as keen as he was."

"So we were; he carried us away, but we didn't originate the whole thing in cold blood. *He* did."

"Do you know what I think is the matter with him?" said Villiers suddenly.

"No, what?"

"He's an American."

"How d'you mean?"

Villiers' meaning had to do with things uncomplimentary to the American mind and imagination: remembering Ben Gunn's nationality he held his tongue.

"Well, what do you mean; what's wrong with Americans?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"You *meant* something."

"I didn't—I *beg* your pardon for contradicting you so flatly—what I mean about him is that he is a hard-headed business man; an Englishman of his type would be certified insane if he went on a treasure-hunting expedition of this sort. It's different with an American."

Ben Gunn was silent for a moment. Then she said, "I see what you mean; you're right, perhaps."

"You aren't angry?"

"Not a bit."

"Shake hands on it."

She gave him her hand with a little laugh, she looked straight into his eyes; it was the psychological moment. The next and he would have raised the hand to his lips, when the ruinous Van Amberg broke the spell.

"Villiers!" came his voice from the trees. He had stepped out from amidst them and was waving excitedly to his companion to come to him.

"Bother!" said Villiers. He released the hand and rose to his feet.

"Don't keep him," implored Ben Gunn, "or he may get angry."

"Bother his anger!"

"*Promise* me not to fight with him."

"I promise."

Their eyes met and there was something in her gaze that made him wildly jubilant as he hurried off to where the treasure-hunter was waiting for him.

"OH, COME here," said Van Amberg, seizing him by the arm and leading him off amidst the trees.

"I'm near crazy. I'm fit to fling myself in the lagoon—Oh, my! to think I should ever have come to this!"

"What on earth is the matter now?"

"Matter—I'm crazy, that's what's the matter! I've acted like the meanest sort of skunk, that's what's the matter. Judas,

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that's the chap—I'm Judas—call me Judas and have done with it. I'm engaged to the best girl in the whole living world and I've gone and denied her!"

"Oh," said Villiers, "the portrait?"

"Yes, the portrait. Said it was my sister's. Well, what do you think—oughtn't a big, strong, able-bodied man to kick me into the lagoon——"

"You did it on the spur of the moment."

"Spur or no spur, I oughtn't to have looked at Ben Gunn, but she got the grains into me first glance; I felt wrong all the time. You remember last night when I owned up about her—well, Sadie was standing before me all the time. It's not that I was so specially in love with this one, but it was just the fact of you being here, and I, and she, all alone together, that made me want her for *myself*. It was the same with the bat-fish, it's the same in business; I guess I'd harpoon my grandmother, if I had one, and she tried to grab a deal. It's my beastly nature."

"You're an American," said Villiers; "it's not your fault; it's the character of your country—you want everything for yourself. Individualism is the polite name—all the same, you're a right good sort; so just bite on the bullet and tell Sadie all about it—she'll know."

"Just you wait. I haven't told you all. I got the bulge on you by swimming where those sharks were—didn't I?"

"You certainly did."

"I sat on the sand afterward drying myself and you two worshiping me; I guess I took all the sun and never said a word——"

"About what?"

"About the sharks—they are as harmless as kittens."

"Sharks harmless!"

"Here on the Florida coast they are—ask any big game-fish man. Read Holder's book if you don't believe me; ask Hoffrath. I've seen him swimming amongst them often—have myself."

Villiers could not but believe, then, remembering Van Amberg's face when he was swimming, Ben Gunn's admiration, his own, and the way Van Amberg had sunned himself in their hero-worship, he went into a fit of laughter—hearty, boyish laughter that echoed amidst the trees and reached the girl, bringing her comfort where she was sitting beneath the mangrove.

CHAPTER XIV

VAN AMBERG, DIPLOMAT

IT IS POSSIBLE that Van Amberg might have resented this reception of his confession had not a new idea seized upon his feverish mind.

"Gosh!" said he. "I never thought of that before."

"What?" asked Villiers.

"Why, don't you see—the Treasure—Great Scott! what a coincidence!"

"Another coincidence?" asked Villiers.

"Another and the biggest. I came here to have a treasure pointed out to me by that darned skeleton, didn't I?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, what was it, really, that the thing was pointing at? What did Ben Gunn pick out of the hole?"

"Sadie's photograph."

"There you have it. Sadie was the treasure that my dream pointed to. I came here to find gold, and Providence has said to me, 'Amberg, Van, John, D, you're an ass, here's your treasure, better than gold, better than diamonds, better than——"

"Pearls, yes, I know," cut in Villiers, rather disgusted at this ebullition of Yankee sentiment, "but look here, John D. Van Amberg, if Providence brought us on this expedition to show you what your real treasure was, where do I come in? We're partners, but it seems to me I can't go half shares in Sadie."

"You've got Ben Gunn."

"Have I? I'm not so sure of that."

"You will have her—own up, honest Injun, you want her?"

"I do."

"Then you'll have her."

"You talk as if you were Providence."

"I'm not a bad substitute when I set my mind to a business. But I must clear myself first about Sadie."

"How do you mean?"

"I've got to go to Ben Gunn and tell her everything—tell her exactly the sort of skunk I've been. I'd never be able to face Sadie again if I didn't."

"You're surely not going to——"

"I surely am. I'm going now. I'm going to say, 'See here, that picture was a portrait of the girl I'm engaged to; I haven't a sister. Also, when you saw me swimming after the boat you thought me a hero. I'm

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not a hero. I did it to cut Villiers out——'"

"Oh, for *heaven's* sake, don't say that! If you must make your infernal confessions, leave me out."

"I'll say nothing that's not right."

"Well, I suppose I can't stop you. When are you going to speak to her?"

"Now," said Van Amberg.

He led the way through the trees, and Villiers took his seat on a fallen tree-trunk, while his companion walked swiftly toward the girl, who was still seated in the mangrove shade.

Villiers took his pipe from his pocket and pretended to be busy filling it, watching Van Amberg all the time.

After standing for a moment in conversation, the substitute for Providence took his seat beside Ben Gunn and the pair fell into earnest talk.

Villiers would have given a good deal to have overheard their discourse.

As he sat watching them, the quaint and delightful personality of the Town Lot Speculator appeared fully and for the first time in its entirety before the eyes of his perception; he chuckled as he sat on the log, happily unconscious of what was going forward beneath the mangrove shade.

He was recalled to reality by seeing both parties suddenly rise to their feet—Ben Gunn first, then Van Amberg.

Then he saw Van Amberg scratching his head and the girl bowing to him.

Bowing to him here on a desert island!

Then the girl turned and walked slowly down to the sea edge, and Van Amberg turned and went frantically toward the place where their little stock of provisions was stored.

VILLIERS sprang to his feet and walked to where she was standing with the little waves washing up almost to her feet.

"You've been having quite a long conversation with Van Amberg."

"Quite."

Her manner and voice had completely changed.

"Did he tell you about the treasure?" asked Villiers, hoping to soften her by the sweet persuasion of mirth.

"I think," said Ben Gunn, speaking rapidly, decidedly, and with an edge in her tone, "I think we will talk no more about that foolishness; conversation on this island may not be able to rise to the level of intellectuality, but it may at least be sane."

"Thanks," said Villiers, horribly huffed. "I'll remember that in future."

He moved away from Ben Gunn, leaving her standing alone by the waves.

His eyes fell on Van Amberg squatting by the provision store and evidently engaged in covering a disturbed state of mind by effusive preparations for lunch.

He made toward him.

The Town Lot Speculator was busy washing a clean plate with water from one of the jars.

"Look here," said Villiers, striding up to him, "what have you been saying to Ben Gunn?"

"What have I been saying to who?" asked Van Amberg, turning to hunt for something amidst the stores.

"She, you know who I mean, what have you been saying to her?"

"What have I been saying to her? Nothing. We had a misunderstanding, that's all. Curse that can-opener! where's it got to——"

"Don't bother about the can-opener—what have you said to make her turn like this?"

"Why, God bless my soul!" cried Van Amberg. "Who made *you* boss of this island and examiner-in-chief? I said what I said, and that's all. Whatch you want, sticking your nose in my business for?"

Villiers grew white—an extremely bad sign with him.

"You're a dirty little Yankee bounder," said Villiers, "like all your tribe, a cad painted to look like a gentleman!"

Van Amberg sprang to his feet.

"That's right," said Villiers, "make another scene before her!"

Van Amberg turned on his heel and walked away—walked away to the very limit of the island where the sand-spit kissed the sea.

As he turned away, Villiers's anger fell from him and he could have bitten his tongue-tip off. He had a nasty streak in his nature—most of us have—and it had got the better of him for a moment and in that moment he had cruelly insulted a man whom he had liked more than a little. He would have run after the insulted one and apologized, but he knew that what he had said was beyond apology, at all events at present.

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SHE WALKED away to the lagoon edge and sat down opposite the key where the birds, quiet for a moment, were grouped in lines like soldiers on parade.

Ben Gunn had gone back to the shade of the mangrove where she was sitting with hands clasping her knees. Van Amberg away on the extreme end of the island was still standing with hands in pockets digesting his insult, and no doubt planning satisfaction. Villiers sitting by the lagoon had unconsciously taken the same attitude as Ben Gunn, hands clasping his knees and eyes fixed before him.

They formed a triangle.

It seemed impossible that they could ever speak to one another again in an ordinary way, yet it seemed highly probable that they would not only have to speak, but to consult seriously together on some plan of escape.

Twenty minutes or more passed and Villiers had swum the lagoon in imagination in company with his mute companions and was making his way up coast towards the Tarpon Club, helping the girl over impossible obstacles, when the rattling of the plates behind him made him turn.

Van Amberg was setting out the luncheon things, and the girl had risen and was approaching. Villiers did the same.

They stood while Van Amberg finished his preparations, then they silently took their seats.

Van Amberg had a gray color that did not improve his appearance. Ben Gunn seemed to be there only in body; her spirit seemed miles away. Villiers alone seemed natural, but he was as speechless as either of the others.

Absolute speechlessness, broken only by——

"Thank you, no more."

"Thank you—this plate will do."

"Will you have another biscuit?"

It might have been the old *table d'hôte* at the Rigi Kulm.

Van Amberg did not once look at Villiers. His lips were dry and he ate feverishly and hurriedly. And the patient sound of the violet-colored sea on the sands, the hush-a-by of the surf on the far reef came all the time insistently, mockingly, more soul-fretting than the jeers of a crowd.

The horrible business was nearly over, and Villiers was in the act of putting his plate away from him, when a sound other than the sound of the sea broke the stillness of the island.

A faint, throbbing sound like the fluttered beating of a heart.

It was the churning of a bronze propeller. They sprang to their feet.

"It's the Sea-Bat launch!" cried Van Amberg, forgetting everything in the excitement of the moment. "Look!"

Coming dead for the island, the white launch, with a feather of foam at her bow, was being driven at the full speed of her humming engines. They could make out the forms of Hoffrath and Pedro on board of her.

It was low tide and the waves on the sand were scarcely a foot in height; the launch, reversing her engines, checked, slowed, and came washing gently toward the beach. Before she could touch the sand Hoffrath sprang out and came wading ashore while Pedro backed her out.

Hoffrath was pale with excitement.

CHAPTER XV

BEN GUNN LEAVES THEM

HE GLANCED swiftly round and took off his hat in a perfunctory manner to the girl, and then turned almost fiercely to Van Amberg.

"What have you done with it?"

"What?"

"The measuring-tape!"

"Oh, the blessed thing is lost—went with the boat; we lost the boat."

"Lost—Great *Scott! Lost!* and I've landed the biggest tarpon in the last five years, d'ye hear me, and it's *shrinking!* It was the only tape in the club!"

The agony of the tarpon man consumed itself in silence for a few seconds.

"I'm awfully sorry."

"Sorry! What's the good of being sorry? What did you take it for, anyhow?"

"Oh, I took it."

"I know you took it—well, there, the thing's lost. This comes of having boys tomfooling round where serious business is being done—"then, turning to Ben Gunn, "I must apologize, but I'm out of temper."

Van Amberg, boiling with rage at the word "boys," was about to reply, when Villiers cut in:

"If it comes to a question of responsibility about the tape I'm as much to blame

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as any one else—but I think we had better put the question aside for the moment. What really matters is that this lady has been cast ashore here from a boating accident; she belongs to the Tarpon Club and is, I am sure, extremely anxious to get back there."

"Our launch is at her disposal," said Hoffrath, regarding Ben Gunn for the first time deliberately, and noticing for the first time her enormous shoes and the fact that she was wearing Van Amberg's hat. "Dear me! a boating accident? How unfortunate! I hope nobody was drowned."

Neither Ben Gunn, Van Amberg, nor Villiers made reply, each leaving the business to the others. Hoffrath, not knowing the facts of the matter, held for a moment silent before the silence of the three, noticing for the first time that they had neither looked at nor spoken to one another. He turned to the girl.

"If you will permit me I'll take you right away to the Tarpon; it's only twelve or fifteen miles up coast, and I can run back here for the others."

"Thanks," said she. "It's very good of you—there wasn't any one drowned, I was in a little launch that caught fire and I swam ashore, that's all."

Hoffrath called to Pedro, and the Seminole brought the launch gently stern on for the beach.

"Quick!" said Hoffrath. He seized Ben Gunn in his long arms before she could resist and, wading out with her, put her on board. Then he got on board himself.

"I'll be back for you fellows in a couple of hours," he cried. "It will take me that, for I have to get some more gasoline."

Villiers took off his hat and Ben Gunn bowed before taking her seat. Van Amberg did not make any returning salute. He had no hat to take off, for she was still wearing it, a fact which she had forgotten in the excitement of the moment.

LOOKING back for a moment, Hoffrath saw Villiers and Van Amberg walking away from each other; looking back again he saw that they were sitting down, Villiers beneath the mangrove that had shaded Ben Gunn, the American by the lagoon edge, his head just showing above the grasses.

"What on earth is the matter with them?" said Hoffrath.

Ben Gunn looked back. "I don't know," she said.

Her eyes were moist, but as her head was turned from him he did not see the fact.

Then Skeleton Island vanished from sight behind a cape, and Hoffrath, who was steering, begged permission to light a cigar.

"They're the queerest pair!" said he. "Now what would you think they were doing on that island?—grown men, mind you."

"What?"

"Hunting for treasure."

"Oh."

"Yes, indeed; and you might all have been there till doomsday if they hadn't fixed up an idiotic sort of charter, Van Amberg—that's the smallest one—dropped it in his bedroom, and when I was hunting round for that blessed tape the club steward brought it to me. 'Here's where your tape is gone,' said he. 'They rousted me out before sun-up yesterday morning, and I found this after they were gone. Blamed if they haven't started treasure-digging!' I got Pedro and the launch and started off. Here's the thing." With his left hand he took a paper from his breast pocket and opened it.

"They were to go half shares in whatever was found—see here, would you believe it?"

He was on the point of reading the first paragraph of the fateful document, when it was snatched from him.

"I think this is a private paper," said Ben Gunn, with her cheeks flaming, "and I don't see any foolishness in being young—some people are just as foolish over tarpon—" Then, softening, "Father is that way too——"

Then after a second's pause. "I'll keep this and give it to Mr.—Mr. Van Amberg when I see him again."

"My dear young lady," said Hoffrath, recovering from his small setback, "you are right. I oughtn't to have shown that thing. Yes, keep it. And as to foolishness in being young, I wish I had some of that foolishness back—and all my tarpon days before me."

"There's the Club," said Ben Gunn.

They had opened a bay; in which, sheltered by a reef, a white building, twin fellow of the Sea-Bat Club, reposed in the bright sunshine.

Boats were sprinkled here and there over

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the blue surface of the bay; and in a yawl right before them the figure of an old gentleman dressed in white, holding a bent rod and shouting directions to his boatman showed up bravely against the blue. He was playing a tarpon, and the whirr of the reel to the rushing fish came distinctly on the breeze.

"It's a whale of a fish," said Hoffrath, gazing in ecstasy, "and he's playing it to a marvel!" Ben Gunn shaded her eyes.

"That's father," said she, "tarpon-fishing, when he ought to have been hunting for me."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FORLORN HOPE

THAT night, as Van Amberg was retiring to rest, a knock came to the door and Villiers appeared.

"Look here," said Villiers, "I want to apologize." Van Amberg, sitting on the side of his bed in his pajamas, curled his toes, without looking up.

"I called you a beastly Yankee," said Villiers. "I was in a temper. I take it back. You can call me a beastly Englishman."

"Where's the use in that?" said Van Amberg. "It was the way you said it."

"Well, you can say it just in the same way if you like."

"I can't."

"That proves you're not in a wax any longer, so shake hands."

Van Amberg looked at the proffered hand for a second, then he stood up and took it.

"I guess we both lost our temper," said Van Amberg.

Villiers took his seat in a cane rocker.

"We all did," said he.

Van Amberg was silent.

"Look here," said Villiers, "you're an engaged man, and it doesn't matter to you much about Ben Gunn, but it matters to me—a lot. What did you say to her that turned her against us both?"

"Oh, my dear fellow," burst out Van Amberg, "I'm most dreadfully and truly sorry, but—I did it for the best."

"Did what?"

"First of all I told her about Sadie."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing; she only raised her eyebrows."

"Naturally. Can't you see, what reason has a man to deny that he's engaged when he's talking to a girl—unless he's gone on the girl? Go on."

"Then I told her of the shark."

"Yes; what did she say to that?"

"She laughed. Then I told her what a good chap you were and—and——"

"Yes."

"I tried to make her understand how you felt about her."

"Oh, heavens! Go on."

"She got huffy a bit—I got regularly bogged and made a grab at Providence. Told her we'd come to the blamed place to find treasure, agreeing to divide what we'd found, and I'd found Sadie, and you'd found her, and that there wasn't any use trying to escape from the workings of Providence."

"Oh, heavens!" said Villiers, his face between his hands. "What more did you say?"

"Nothing."

"What did she say?"

"She said 'Thank you, I have heard enough,' and got up and bowed to me."

"Oh, dear me!" said Villiers uncovering his face, which was flushed. "Can't you see—can't you see we'd only known her for a few hours?"

"The bother was," said Van Amberg, curling his toes and picking at the quilt, "I felt as if we'd known her for years, and I felt so rotten at the way I'd tried to get the bulge on you over the deal—I mean the business—I thought, 'Here's your chance now to put things straight and give old Villiers a leg up.' I didn't know I was going to send you right over the horse. I tried to rush the deal when it was hot."

"You weren't trying to make love to her for me? That's a thing no girl can stand—we'd been talking together just before, and I expect she thought I'd put you up to it. Not only that, but it was such awfully bad—what shall I say—to talk of love at all to a girl alone with us like that!"

"I know," said Van Amberg, "but it wasn't my fault altogether. I was led on and on. First the way I treated you about Ben Gunn, then the way I'd treated Sadie about her, and then the way I'd treated her about Sadie."

"*How* did you treat Ben Gunn ill about Sadie? This is the first I've heard of it."

"Why, by making love to her."

"Making love to her!"

"Great Scott, yes! Where were your eyes?"

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"Tell me," said Villiers, a horrible idea suddenly striking him, "you didn't, amongst your other confessions and apologies, go apologizing to her for having treated her badly by not telling her about Sadie?"

Van Amberg did not reply. He curled his toes.

"Don't say any more," said Villiers, rising to go. "You've outraged every blessed canon of common sense and common decency. Why, —— it, man, love's not a wheat deal! You're a blundering old ass, but the best fellow in the world when women aren't about. Now tumble into bed and sleep, if you can, for you have to be up early tomorrow."

"What for?"

"You'll see. It's a forlorn hope, but it's worth trying."

CHAPTER XVII

"LOVE IS THE ONLY TREASURE WORTH LIFTING"

NEXT morning in a blaze of sunshine the two men made from the Sea-Bat Club steps down the sandy beach to the mole, Villiers leading.

"What is it?" asked Van Amberg, to whom the other had not yet unfolded his plan.

"You can drive a gasoline launch?"

"Should think I could!"

"Well, then," said Villiers, pointing to the club launch floating like a white spirit on the pale emerald of the lagoon, "you've got to get into that with me and take me to the Tarpon Club full speed!"

"You're not going to——"

"I am."

"There's no gasoline in her."

"There is; I tipped Pedro last night and he filled her tanks and got her ready. Here he is, waiting for us."

Pedro in a dingey was hanging on to the mole steps.

"Is Pedro going with us?"

"No. We're going alone."

"Oh, my!" said Van Amberg. Then, after a moment's pause, "Why not take Pedro and leave me?"

"Pedro couldn't talk to her father or her aunt, or whoever is sure to be very much in the way."

"Come on," said Van Amberg.

He led the way down the steps, Pedro rowed them to the launch, and in five minutes she was unbuoyed and gliding over the green lagoon towards the break in the reef. The gulf swell took her with a kiss, and the crying of the gulls from Cormorant Key followed her weakly and despairingly as she headed away up-coast over the blue, swifter and whiter than they.

Capes rose up, drew near, and passed, and bay after bay opened before them and closed behind them, and gulls flew with them crying challenges, and flying-fish flittered over the blue like the flights of ghostly arrows. They passed the bones of a ship blown ashore long years ago, and Skeleton Island disclosed itself with the mangroves burning in the sun, and a flicker of gulls behind them, and vanished like a dream wiped away by speed.

"That's the Tarpon Club," said Van Amberg, as they opened the bay. Several boats were afloat on the bay, and a schooner that had put in during the night lay at anchor outside the reef, her white sails shaken out waiting for the wind, and casting long reflections on the satin-like surface of the water.

A white canoe was just leaving the opening in the reef, the double-bladed paddle flashing in the sun. Canoes are not used on this coast, at least canoes of this type, and it drew their attention.

There was a girl in it.

Van Amberg reduced speed.

"What are you going to do?" asked Villiers.

"Leave everything to me," said the other, taking the tiller. He was steering for the canoe.

Then he stopped the engines, gave the tiller to Villiers, took off his coat and kicked off his shoes.

"Tell her I'm swimming ashore for a wager," said he. "That will give you time by yourself with her without any aunts or uncles to spike your gun."

Next moment he was overboard.

"Well, of all the lunatics!" said Villiers.

HE STOOD up. The launch, with scarcely any way in her, was drifting in the track of the canoe, which was now close. The girl had ceased paddling for a moment; then she went on, and a few strokes brought her within speaking distance of the launch. Van Amberg's black head bobbing in the water to shoreward

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looked like a net-float. No other boat was within hail. The launch and the canoe were alone on the blue, blue sea.

"He's doing it for a wager," said Villiers, "and he has quite forgotten that I don't know how to manage a gasoline launch."

Ben Gunn brought her canoe cautiously and circumspectly to the starboard side of the launch, and rested her paddle on the thwart.

"I'm sorry," said she, "I hadn't time to say good-by properly to you both yesterday. I ought to have remembered all you both did for me. I want to say it now."

"Not good-by!" said Villiers.

"He'll reach shore all right," said she, turning her head towards the vanishing swimmer.

"Yes, he'll reach shore—but I don't know how I will. What shall I do? Turn levers and things and just leave all the rest to chance?"

Ben Gunn looked over the sea at the other boats.

"No," she replied. "There's father; he has sighted your launch and he's coming along. He'll help you."

Villiers looked. A boat, from which a tarpon rod rose up thread-like against the sky, was rowing towards them.

"Ben Gunn," said Villiers. She turned her face to him, and he took the hand that was resting on the paddle shaft. She laughed with a little shudder, like that of a person awakening from sleep, and the canoe, drawn gently to the side of the white launch, kissed it.

"I AM sending you a wedding present," wrote Van Amberg, three months later. "I got it made at Tiffany's from my own design. Sadie sends congratulations and heaps of good wishes——"

"Why, it's a model of Skeleton Island!" said Ben Gunn, gazing at the silver épergne which Villiers had just unpacked from its wrappings.

It was, and from the index phalanx of the tiny sprawling silver skeleton a fine thread of gold ran across the silver island to some words cut upon a plaque beneath a silver mangrove tree.

"*Love is the only treasure worth lifting.*"

"Isn't it funny," said the girl, clasping her hands and gazing at the work of art, "and isn't it like him!"

"I think there's nothing exactly like him," said Villiers, "but, then, I'm English, you know."

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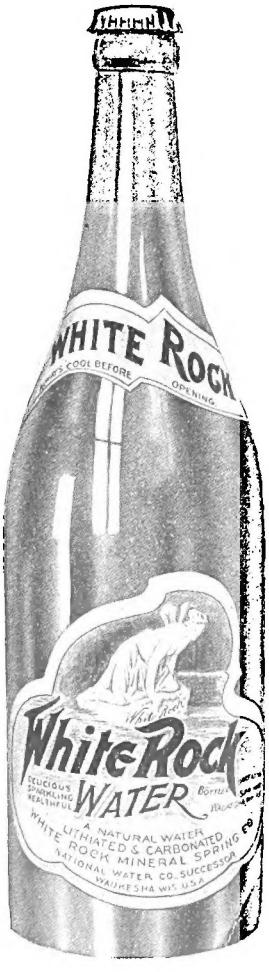

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